NATIONAL CEMETERY OPERATIONS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDREDTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JULY 1, 1987

Printed for the use of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Serial No. 100-22

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
77-308 WASHINGTON : 1987

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office
U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402

H761-79

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NATIONAL CEMETERY OPERATIONS

Wednesday, July 1, 1987

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m., Hon. Marcy Kaptur (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Kaptur, Burton, Harris, Davis, and Patterson.

Miss KAPTUR. The subcommittee will come to order this morning.

We want to welcome all of our distinguished witnesses and the guests in the audience, and we're going to divert from normal procedure just for a second. The ranking minority member, Dan Burton, has to go to an important Foreign Affairs Committee meeting. I'd like him to make his official statement for the record prior to my own.

Go ahead, Dan.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAN BURTON

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I'd first of all like to welcome the Hon. John McCain, my colleague and classmate in the 98th Congress in the Senate. You're doing a great job over there, John. Welcome back. And welcome to my two colleagues from the House. I appreciate having you here today.

I look forward to this opportunity, Madam Chairwoman, to hear and to read the testimony concerning the national cemetery system, which is under our jurisdiction.

I'd like to praise Miss Kaptur, the chairwoman of this subcommittee, for looking into this matter in hopes of using all our resources available to improve the national cemetery operations.

The witness list comprises a distinguished panel, which enables us to study closely a system that already operates well. I trust that we can incorporate their testimony into viable solutions to problems we will encounter in the future.

Then national cemetery system has a projected growth between 1983 and 1993 of 31 percent. This number is expected to rise as our veteran population ages; therefore, I look forward to this opportunity to address our future responsibility stated in the VA report listing the 10 areas most in need of additional veterans' burial space.

Legislatively we are faced with several important bills that could enhance the program. We should take this time to study their impact upon our efforts to improve the system.

In closing I would like to recognize Miss Kaptur for H.R. 1987, which would name the tomb area at Arlington National Cemetery, "Tomb of the Unknowns." This change from the unofficial term "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" would acknowledge the other services that have also fought with distinction.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I'm sorry I have to rush.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Burton, very much, and for your fine contributions on this subcommittee. We wish you well at your Foreign Affairs hearings.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN MARCY KAPTUR

Miss KAPTUR. Ladies and gentlemen, today marks the first hearing on the memorial affairs aspect of our subcommittee. The subcommittee's jurisdiction extends over the national cemetery system administered by the Veterans' Administration, Arlington National Cemetery which is administered by the Department of the Army, and the overseas cemeteries and memorials maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission.

We will focus not only on the operation of these facilities, but also on current legislation pending before our subcommittee. We will hear from the Veterans' Administration on the implementation of Public Law 99-576 concerning installation of upright markers in our national cemeteries, on the content of the report required by that law, and on future expansion plans.

We would like to hear from them on workload and on possible ways to improve cemetery efficiency, such as the installation of grave liners.

Staffing should not be a problem since the House Appropriations Committee has targeted an additional $2 million for 32 full-time employees and supplies and materials to restore Department of Memorial Affairs staffing to the fiscal year 1985 level of 1,219 persons.

Public Law 99-576 also authorized the administrator to establish cemeteries in 10 areas of the country. I was pleased to note that the House Appropriations Committee earmarked funds for environmental impact statements in the Chicago, Cleveland, and Seattle areas.

The legislation we will be considering today includes a proposal to exempt the cemetery section adjacent to the Wood, Wisconsin, VA medical center from compliance with the upright policy; a proposal, H.R. 1999, to authorize the administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress; a proposal, H.R. 1987, to designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery where the remains of four unknown service members are interred as the "Tomb of the Unknowns;" and a proposal, H.R. 2653, which would establish a foreign currency fluctuation account within the American Battle Monuments Commission.

[The prepared statement of Chairwoman Kaptur appears on p. 49.]

Miss KAPTUR. Before proceeding further, I just wanted to, again, thank everyone who has come this morning, particularly all of our distinguished members, and I would like to pay an official welcome, as well, to Senator John McCain, who served with us so well here, and we were a little sad to see you move over to the Senate, but with your quality we know that you will make an equally fine contribution there, Senator. We welcome you this morning.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN MC CAIN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman. I see that you have a very long list of witnesses, so I will try to be extremely brief. It's certainly refreshing to be back here with you and my friends, particularly the two on the right and left of me, although I think both should be to the right.

Miss KAPTUR. We're working on them, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. With my friends back here who I, indeed, miss a great deal.

Madam Chairwoman, I would like to thank you for your interest in this legislation. Your sponsoring H.R. 1987, I think, is very important. I have, as you know, sponsored the—introduced identical legislation, S. 1247. The tomb area and its guards have been a symbol of dignity and reverence for generations of Americans. There is no official name for the area at this time. It has never been officially named, and I think many Americans would appreciate it. It's clear that most veteran's organizations would—if we could enact a relatively simple piece of legislation which would entitle this area "The Tomb of the Unknowns."

Madam Chairwoman, as you know the Amvets, Blinded American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, National Commissioned Officers Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, American Ex-POW's, Marine Corp League, and other organizations support this legislation. I think it would be entirely appropriate for us to see that it's passed as expeditiously as possible.

Finally, there is an individual here today, Mr. Bob Moran, who is a member of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He wrote me a letter that I would be request to be included in the record along with my statement, and I'd like to just quote to you the last part of this letter. He said, "Now is the time to correct an inadequacy that has existed in our Nation's history, and to name in law the area where all four service persons are interred as the 'Tomb of the Unknowns.' Don't you think it's time that this national shrine, which is visited by over 6 million people from around the world, be properly named by law. As one of our Nation's disabled veterans, one who lost part of his body in defense of his country, I do."

I think Mr. Moran, who sits over here's, statement exemplifies the reason why we should support this legislation.

Again, I appreciate your enormous support for it, and I look forward to working with you and my colleagues to making it a reality very soon.

Thank you very much for your courtesy in having me here this morning.

[The prepared statement of Senator McCain appears on p. 51.]

Miss KAPTUR. Senator, I just wanted to express the appreciation of the full subcommittee for your taking the time to appear today in support of the bill to rename, or to name officially, the tomb at Arlington National Cemetery. I have to say it feels very good to know that the two bodies here are working hand in hand. I really commend you for taking the lead in the Senate and we are going to move expeditiously on this bill.

I'm so glad that you mentioned Bob Moran's name. You may not be aware that today is his birthday. How about that, Bob? Happy birthday from everybody here today. We're glad you're with us. He's worked so vigilantly on this effort.

We thank you very much, again, Senator, for your support.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much.

Miss KAPTUR. I notice that Congressman McEwen has also come in. If you want to join us at the witness table, Bob, feel free.

Mr. MCEWEN. All right.

Miss KAPTUR. I wanted to call on our very distinguished colleague here, Mr.—we call him Gerry—Gerald Solomon, who is such a hardworking member of our subcommittee, and a regular guy. We welcome you here today, and you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. GERALD B. H. SOLOMON, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. SOLOMON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Call me Gerry, will you?

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before this, the best subcommittee of the best committee in the Congress, as far as I'm concerned. I thank you for including your attention on these important issues today.

Madam Chairwoman and colleagues, Public Law 99–576 does require the administrator to list in a report to the Congress those areas of the United States, based upon demographic analysis, where the need for additional burial space is greatest. I'm very pleased this report lists Albany, New York, as one of the 10 regions of the country which are most in need of a national cemetery today.

As the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I fully understand that this report does not altar the cemetery policy or ensure that these locations will be selected for construction of a cemetery immediately; however, the clear intent of the Congress in approving this law was to further remove the decision-making process involving cemetery locations from the political arena.

Decisions regarding the best locations for the placement of national cemeteries should be based solely on how to best meet the needs of our Nation's veterans and their families now and into the future. The location of national cemeteries should not and must not be the result of undue Congressional pressure. In this regard the Veterans' Administration should give full weight to the report on the national cemetery system and those priority sites that are listed in that report.

Madam Chairwoman, I wish to also point out that the Albany capitol region has historical significant areas where a national

cemetery could be located. One prime example is the Saratoga area, and as all of you know, the Saratoga Battlefield is the site of the most significant battle in our country's history, and one of the critical conflicts of world history, as well. The Battle of Saratoga was the turning point of the American Revolution, which made possible the establishment of this great Nation of ours.

Lastly, Madam Chairwoman, I would note that several members of the New York State delegation, including Congressman Sam Stratton, who is the dean of our delegation, strongly supports the report on the national cemetery system recommendation that a national veterans' cemetery be placed in the Albany region.

I appreciate your holding the hearing on this important matter, and I look forward to working with you on the full committee in whatever recommendations that your committee does make.

I also would like to point out—I guess Senator McCain is gone—but I fully support his legislation, as does Sonny Montgomery, as you know, and we would look forward to helping you expedite that legislation as quickly as possible.

Thank you so much.

Miss KAPTUR. I just want to say, Gerry, that it's a real honor to have the ranking minority member here before our subcommittee today, and we look forward to your help. I really appreciate your comments about the adequacy of the method that the VA has chosen to assess the need for cemeteries being located in various parts of the country. It's obvious that you think their evaluation system is a proper one, and I think that's one of the things we would like to decide, ourselves, as a subcommittee. So your comments are most helpful in that regard.

Mr. SOLOMON. Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate that. If you don't mind, I do have a Foreign Affairs meeting that I've got to get to, as well.

Good luck in your meeting.

Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. All right. Good luck to you. Thank you so much for being with us today.

I know that we're going to call people in the order in which they have come in. Congressman Stump, who I have to say normally collects money at our Thursday morning prayer breakfast and does a really good job and has never been up before the Ethics Committee for any problems with that—we're so happy to have you here before the committee today to testify. You may proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. BOB STUMP, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. STUMP. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee today on behalf of all of the Arizona delegation on House Bill 1884, which would establish a national cemetery in Arizona.

Arizonans have been working in excess of 50 years to try to establish a new veterans' cemetery in Arizona, the closest one being in Riverside, which from some parts of the State is in excess of 500 miles for some families to have to go, and we don't think that is right.

Arizona veterans, with the aid of State and Federal officials, have established a Veterans' Commission cemetery, all conforming to national veterans' cemetery standards, with some 6,000 grave sites already there. We're looking forward to the time that we can work and turn over to the VA and establish this as a veterans' cemetery.

Arizona was, as Gerry mentioned, one of the top 10 in need throughout the country, as established by Public Law 99-576.

Madam Chairwoman, that's all I have to say, except I'm sorry Gerry left because somebody's going to have to correct the record, because every time he appears before one of our subcommittees he always says this is the best subcommittee. It's going to catch up with him one of these days.

Miss KAPTUR. Do you say that to every subcommittee?

Mr. STUMP. I would answer any questions if any other members have any, Madam Chairwoman.

I thank you.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Stump appears on p. 54.]

Miss KAPTUR. I have a rather difficult question for you. As I understand it, your desire is to have the Veterans' Administration take over the Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery and make it part of our national cemetery system. I guess I'm basically going to ask you the precedent-setting question: do you think that's a good precedent for us to set, or do you think other States are then going to want the VA to take over their veterans' cemeteries?

Mr. STUMP. Well, I think ours is more of an anticipation in seeing the need down in the future. We started to work on it so we would have it ready, knowing that at the time we started that we were not going to get it then. The money wasn't there, nor, perhaps, was the need there.

Our current rate of burial, I think, is some 4 a day. With the 225 acres presently encompassed within the boundary and then leasing an additional 400 acres adjoining it, we could have a cemetery that would last in excess of 40 years. I think the Veterans' Administration estimated the cost for establishing this, taking over as it is now, of some—I have the figure down—$2.5 million, Madam Chairwoman, to take this over. I don't know about the precedent. I'm sure that that could be a concern on the part of some people, but we look at it as being in anticipation of incorporating, trying to get ready so that if the time came that we could move very rapidly to establish a national cemetery.

Miss KAPTUR. All right. Well, we will certainly look at your recommendations very closely as we put our legislation together, and we appreciate your personally coming over here this morning.

Mr. STUMP. Thank you. I do have a full statement I'd like to ask to be inserted into the record.

Miss KAPTUR. Your prepared statement has been inserted in the record immediately following your oral presentation.

Mr. STUMP. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. All right. Thank you very much.

I see our friend, my good colleague from the State of Ohio, Bob McEwen, distinguished member of the committee, with us this

morning. Of course, I have a special interest in Ohio. We're so happy to see Bob. Why don't you proceed with your statement?

STATEMENT OF HON. BOB MC EWEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

Mr. MCEWEN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee today to present my views regarding the Veterans' Administration national cemetery system. Moreover, I wish to begin by commending you for your leadership in holding this hearing so rapidly, which is so important to Ohio veterans and those across the country. Of course, it's a privilege to appear with my distinguished colleagues and members of our committee, both Bob Stump and Gerry, and we welcome the participation of our colleagues in this vital effort of serving this important segment of our Nation.

It's through the national cemeteries, more than any other way, that our Nation pays tribute not only to our war dead, but to all the men and women who have served in our armed forces.

We currently have 110 national cemeteries across the United States; however, only 65 are even open for additional burials. As you are well aware, we are facing a period in which the rate of veterans' deaths are increasing significantly, and the number of available burial plots are decreasing. In addition, the projected peak period is estimated at between the years 2000 and 2015, at which time the age of 65 and over veteran group will increase from its present level of about 4 million to approximately 9 million people. These numbers indicate that our committee and the VA must be in a position to properly address this situation.

The recent report of the national cemetery system has indicated 10 geographic areas which have the greatest need of burial space for our veterans. The Cleveland, Akron, Canton, Ohio, area is ranked second in the Nation. During the last Congress you, Madam Chairwoman, and our other Ohio colleagues on the Veterans' Committee, joined in sponsoring legislation to establish a national cemetery to meet the needs of veterans in Ohio. Now, this proposal was passed as Public Law 99–576.

Madam Chairwoman, good management practices dictate that national cemeteries be provided in locations where they will serve the largest number of veterans. Northern Ohio is such a location. This area has a population of nearly 800,000 veterans. Moreover, the establishment of a national cemetery in the area would provide burial privileges for almost 8 percent of the veterans that are presently unserved.

Now, I'm aware of the regional concept that has been put forth by the VA, and that such a regional cemetery exists at Fort Custer, Michigan; however, this cemetery does not serve Ohio, which is over 300 miles away. In fact, at last count there were only two veterans from Ohio that had been buried in that facility.

In my view it's imperative that we give priority to this cemetery project and those similar to this case which will serve a substantial number of veterans at a cost-effective and responsible manner.

I'm pleased that the Appropriations Committee has recently provided the preliminary monies for the environmental impact study

for Cleveland, Chicago, and the Seattle-Tacoma areas; however, our work in this area has just begun and we should continue to move forward with these efforts in an expeditious manner.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. This concludes my statement. Of course, I'm anxious to answer any questions.

Again, I express my gratitude to you and my respect for your leadership in this area.

Miss KAPTUR. I wanted to ask both Congressman McEwen and Congressman Stump if you have a couple of minutes now to answer questions—and also Congressman Holloway—so I can give members of the subcommittee a chance to question you, as well. If it's all right with you, Congressman Holloway, we'll question the previous two witnesses and then we'll move on to you.

Congressman McEwen, one of the things I've been thinking about: in this regional designation of the VA they go to the largest metropolitan areas, which is fine, and in Ohio that turns out to be Cleveland. Yet, I look at my own area of Toledo, which is over at the other end of the State, also in Northern Ohio, and I say to myself, "Why don't they put it right in between us somewhere out near Sandusky Bay where there's a lot of Federal property?" How much thought have you given, if at all, to trying to find a location that would accommodate both major populations centers in the northern part of the State?

Mr. MCEWEN. Well, as you know I would not only like to do that, but also would like to mention the word "southern" in there. The southern part of the State has a large veteran population, so I have encouraged them to meet with the Veterans' Department of the Governor's office that is making its recommendations and working with the VA, and very simply to put it where it serves the greatest number of people.

Mr. KAPTUR. Number of people. Maybe it's Columbus. I just don't know enough about this to know where the most appropriate location is, but the shortest travel time for all Ohioans would be the center of the State.

Mr. MCEWEN. I think that is absolutely the case and should be considered. The Newark-Lincoln County area just off Interstate 71, which gives immediate access up and down Northeastern Ohio, as well as Northwestern, and then give you access to the southern part of the State, has taken an active interest in this, and they have a great facility that's available, as well as the Maslin area. The City Council has voted to give land that is just off of Route 30 and not more than 10 miles from Interstate 77, which would give immediate access, as well.

I appreciate your concern and I agree with it wholeheartedly.

Miss KAPTUR. So you think that there are some properties that could be donated to the VA at no cost?

Mr. MCEWEN. There are. There are a myriad of them, a significant number of communities that are ready, willing, and able to do this.

Miss KAPTUR. Do you know where the State is, and the veterans' organizations, in working with the VA, do you know where they are on this at this point?

Mr. MCEWEN. They're taking recommendations. They are about to make recommendations now that the money has been appropri-

ated, or will be shortly, for the environmental impact statement. I believe it's three locations where environmental impact studies will be done. They will have overviews as to whether or not certain criteria is met and in so doing I think that they will have geographic diversity in the final recommendations. That's my understanding at this point.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you very much.

I'd like to call on Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, thank you Madam Chairwoman.

Bob, the State cemetery in Arizona, is it in and around—

Mr. STUMP. It's northeast of Phoenix.

Mr. DAVIS. How far?

Mr. STUMP. About, oh, 8 miles northeast of Phoenix.

Mr. DAVIS. Was that built with a State cemetery grant?

Mr. STUMP. The Veterans' organizations—no. Federal monies?

Mr. DAVIS. Yes.

Mr. STUMP. Well, yes there was some Federal money, but I'm not sure—

Mr. DAVIS. Well, there's a grant procedure for State veterans cemeteries.

Mr. STUMP. The veterans' organizations in the State raised over $100,000 to get it established.

Mr. DAVIS. And how many grave sites?

Mr. STUMP. There are 6,000 right now.

Mr. DAVIS. And it's filling up.

Mr. STUMP. Only at the rate of four a day, which with the currently land that we have there would last 40 years.

Mr. DAVIS. But we all know Arizona takes all of our senior citizens, and you've got them all out there. I guess the question is: is that the problem; that people that are passing away in the metropolitan Phoenix area and in that immediate area, are they not being sent home to be buried back to the midwest? Or are they being buried out there?

Mr. STUMP. I think it's both, you know. Those people that have not been there for a long period of time would probably prefer to ship their people back home, but we have a very rapidly-growing population. My Congressional district, from census to census, grew by 68 percent. So that tells you what we're faced with.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, we know that the Phoenix-Tucson area is exploding. How far is Tucson?

Mr. STUMP. Tucson is 120 miles, but three-fourths of the population is right there in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Mr. DAVIS. Yes. Thank you very much.

Miss KAPTUR. Not knowing Arizona very well, is Phoenix centrally located to most of the population?

Mr. STUMP. Phoenix is almost centrally located in the State, yes. It is the population center of the State.

Miss KAPTUR. I would say Jack Davis has spent more time in Arizona than I have.

Yes, I'd like to call on Mr. Harris.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I don't have any questions, but I do have an opening statement that I'd like to make a part of the record.

Miss KAPTUR. Without objection.

[The statement of Congressman Harris appears on p. 57.]

Miss KAPTUR. No questions.

I was just provided information for the record that a Veterans' Administration grant to Arizona in the amount of $240,000 was provided, so there is Federal money involved there.

We would like to thank both members who spent time here this morning with us, and to let you know that we are going to move quickly on this. We will do our very best to accommodate your interest within the budget that we have. We're very pleased to see members of the VA staffs that are concerned with this are here with us today.

Thank you very much.

Finally, we'd like to call on Congressman Clyde Holloway if you'd like to make your statement for the record. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF HON. CLYDE C. HOLLOWAY, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

Mr. HOLLOWAY. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Let's see if I'm on here.

Of course, I'm not that used to testifying before these committees, so if I blunder a little bit here, stand with me please.

I appreciate you allowing me to testify before this distinguished subcommittee today. Thank you for this opportunity. It's indeed a pleasure for me to be asked to give testimony.

Veterans mean a great deal to me in my district, as well as throughout the country, because of what they've done for this country.

I took the liberty on June the 25th of introducing legislation H.R. 2789, which would require the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to establish a national cemetery in the central geographic region of Louisiana. I took this action because the grave space for our veterans in Louisiana is severely limited and will soon be filled.

Currently we have two cemeteries in Louisiana which are open: one is in my district, in Pineville; the other is in the City of Zachary, which is in Richard Baker's district, very close to the City of Baton Rouge. Pineville is in the central part of the State.

We have very limited space left, and the Veterans' Administration predicts by 1991, 1992 we'll be filled at both cemeteries. The cemeteries may be filled even sooner than that because there are about 200 burials a year in the Zachary cemetery, but only about 400 spaces left, so the cemetery could be filled as early as next year. There are about 175 burials a year in the Pineville Cemetery. They have one acre of land available still close to that cemetery, but its purchase would be very expensive. With the devasting economy in the our State, no veterans' group can afford to buy this land and donate it back to the VA. I know this is the traditional and preferred method of land acquisition. I feel we could probably put in a cemetery that could be utilized for hundreds of years. It is located in an area that we've looked at already.

In 1973, as you know, Congress enacted legislation which would establish regional cemeteries. When our two cemeteries are filled, Louisiana veterans would have to go to Houston to be buried. At

the closest border to the State it's about 150 miles to Houston. New Orleans is about 350 miles, and Shreveport is around 250 miles from this area.

Some weeks ago I took the opportunity to visit one of the abandoned military bases in Louisiana, Camp Claiborne, which incidentally was the largest military base in America during the Second World War—almost 75,000 troops were there. It was closed immediately after World War II. By the way, Camp Claiborne is very, very close to my home, only about 5 miles away.

Among the people with me was Mark Maynard, superintendent of the Alexandria National Cemetery. He agreed that Camp Claiborne is a beautiful area that is very adequate; the land is very suitable. It has unlimited acreage. It is a national forest.

In our opinion it would be an ideal place for a cemetery. It would just give us unlimited years and years and years of space there. It is currently used by the Air Force as a firing range, but it's so big that this is miles and miles away. We could place this cemetery somewhere close to the U.S. highway.

But, you know, Madam Chairwoman, the burial issue is a sensitive one to me, and I feel that we owe it to our veterans to create suitable grave space for them. Again, I just want to say thanks to you for allowing me to testify. I would be willing to answer any questions.

We feel that this central location is one which all of Louisiana could use. It's among pines and hills, out of the bayous of the lowlands of Louisiana. It's just barely out—about 10 miles out of the area where we actually go below sea level in Louisiana, so it would, in my opinion, be a very acceptable site. If there's another site out there, though, we definitely are not trying to pick one site. We'd would just like to see a veterans cemetery established in Louisiana before it is too late.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Holloway appears on p. 58.]

Miss KAPTUR. Could I ask you, Congressman Holloway, after your excellent presentation: the VA policy has been to accept donations of adjacent land when that will help a national cemetery open, stay open, and continue serving local veterans. Then the VA opens and develops the land for burials. Has there been any volunteer effort in Louisiana, to your knowledge, to acquire adjacent land and then donate it to the VA for cemetery development?

Mr. HOLLOWAY. I'm not familiar with the cemetery at Zachary, but the one in Pineville area has only one acre that is available. There is a church located there, and it would cost—I want to say there's a purchase price of $80,000 on the one acre. With that money I feel like we could be very well on our way to putting in a totally new cemetery there that would serve the whole State.

The other cemetery I'm not familiar with, but it is a fairly populous area and I believe it would be very difficult to purchase land adjacent to the cemetery.

Miss KAPTUR. With regard to establishing a new national cemetery on land at Camp Caliborne or Camp Livingston, do you have any information on whether the land has been declared excess by the Army? And if so, how much land would there be?

Mr. HOLLOWAY. I'm not at—you know, I feel like the land is used strictly for forest land in the area we're talking about. There is some beautiful pine timber there, but there are just thousands and thousands of acres. The land is totally available. There's no one in the area. I feel we would have no problem, you know, having that land transferred over to the cemetery service because they are not using it, especially the part that's adjacent and close to U.S. Highway 165. There are just hundreds of thousands of acres of land there.

Miss KAPTUR. Mr. Holloway, do you know how many veterans would be served by locating the cemetery in that area? You mentioned Mr. Harris. Would he be bringing people from his State?

Mr. HOLLOWAY. I doubt we could get those Alabamans to come to Louisiana. They're pretty hard-headed over in Alabama.

We have 438,000 veterans, I think, in Louisiana, and this location could serve the entire State, in my opinion. Being a fairly large State it would be a pretty good distance from the City of New Orleans, but very much like what you were talking about in Ohio. I think if we're going to do it, it's an area where land would be endless; this cemetery could serve us forever in Louisiana.

Miss KAPTUR. You're a superb spokesman for the State of Louisiana.

Let me turn to Mr. Harris and ask: do you have any questions?

Mr. HARRIS. No, ma'am.

Miss KAPTUR. All right. Mr. Davis?

Mr. DAVIS. No, I don't. Very good, Clyde.

Mr. HOLLOWAY. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. Mr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. No.

Miss KAPTUR. No. No questions at this time. We're proud to include you in our freshman class, Clyde.

Mr. HOLLOWAY. Thank you very much.

Miss KAPTUR. Clyde, thank you for appearing and by personally coming this morning. We will certainly take your recommendations into consideration and look very seriously at them as we proceed here.

The next witness is Maj. Gen. Donald C. Hilbert, Commander, U.S. Army, Military District of Washington, accompanied by Mr. Raymond J. Costanzo, Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery, and also Col. William E. Ryan, Director of Operations and Finance, American Battle Monuments Commission.

We certainly welcome you, sir.

General HILBERT. Do you want me to come up here now?

Miss KAPTUR. Please.

We appreciate you gentlemen being here. We know the tremendous responsibility that each of you hold, and we thank you ahead of time for the fine service that you are giving to our country. We welcome your appearance before this subcommittee this morning. We would like you to proceed in the order in which you are listed on the agenda, starting with Major General Hilbert.

STATEMENT OF MAJ. GEN. DONALD C. HILBERT, COMMANDER, U.S. ARMY MILITARY DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON, ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY; ACCOMPANIED BY RAYMOND J. COSTANZO, SUPERINTENDENT OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

General HILBERT. Thank you.

Madam Chairwoman, distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am Maj. Gen. Donald C. Hilbert, Commander of the United States Army, Military District of Washington, and I am appearing on behalf of the Secretary of the Army, who is responsible for the operation of Arlington National Cemetery.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to give you a general status report on the operation of Arlington National Cemetery, and to express the views of the Department of Defense with respect to H.R. 1987, a bill to designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery, where the remains of four unknown service members are interred, as the "Tomb of the Unknowns." I have with me this morning Mr. Ray Costanzo, the Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery, who is also available for any questions that you may wish to pursue.

Madam Chairwoman, with your approval I will summarize my report and submit my full report for the record.

Miss KAPTUR. Your prepared statement will be inserted in the record immediately following your oral presentation.

General HILBERT. From its origins during the Civil War, Arlington National Cemetery has become a great national and military shrine. This 1,100 acre estate, which comprises Arlington National Cemetery and the Fort Myer Military Reservation, has a rich historical background.

It became the property of John Parke Custis in 1778 and descended to his son, George Washington Parke Custis, who built the handsome Greek Revival Mansion now known as the Arlington House.

The house and grounds were owned by the Robert E. Lee family at the outbreak of the Civil War when the house was taken over by the Government for military purposes. The establishment of the cemetery dates from 1864.

Over the years, representatives of all the Nation's wars and conflicts have been buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Prominent among the memorials in Arlington National Cemetery are the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater and tomb where the remains of the unknowns from World War I, World War II, Korean Conflict, and Vietnam Era are interred. The Tomb is a hallowed and cherished shrine where placement of wreaths by foreign dignitaries and representatives of schools, religious groups, and civil and fraternal organizations has become a tribute of respect to all the Nation's heroes.

Arlington is also the final resting place of two former presidents, President Taft and President Kennedy.

The unique nature of Arlington National Cemetery as a national as well as military shrine is well recognized.

At the close of fiscal year 1986, the remains of 202,068 persons were interred and/or inurned in Arlington National Cemetery. Of

this total, 196,205 persons were interred, and 5,863 remains inurned in the Columbarium.

In fiscal year 1986, services were conducted for 4,040 persons, which included 72 General and Flag Officers. In fiscal year 1987 and 1988 burials and inurnments are projected to be 4,180 and 4,320 respectively. Approximately 15 interments are accomplished daily. At the present rate of burial, it is projected that the cemetery will not be filled until approximately the year 2020.

The second 5,000-niche unit of the Columbarium was opened in April of 1986 to accommodate inurnment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans not otherwise eligible for burial in Arlington. Design funds for the next 10,000-niche increment were requested in fiscal year 1988, construction funds will be requested in fiscal year 1989.

The construction of the new visitors' center was started in fiscal year 1986, and its associated parking facility will start construction this month. We expect the complex to be completed in July of 1988.

In addition to the principal function of Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington is the site of many non-funeral ceremonies each year. In fiscal year 1986, 1,937 such ceremonies were conducted. A like number of ceremonies is anticipated for fiscal years 1987 and 1988. The President of the United States, 10 foreign heads of State, Governors, and other high-ranking military and political officials participated in these ceremonies in fiscal year 1986.

In fiscal year 1986, the President of the United States and the Prince and Princess of Wales attended the Veterans' Day ceremony. In March of 1987, the Vice President, along with numerous dignitaries, dedicated the Challenger Memorial to the seven crew members of the Space Shuttle Challenger who lost their lives in the explosion of the shuttle in January 1986.

Arlington National Cemetery has approximately 4 million visitors annually, second only in the National Capital Region to the Smithsonian Institution as a most visited site.

And now, Madam Chairwoman, I will comment on H.R. 1987.

The Tomb area, in which there are interred the bodies of the unknown servicemen of World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam Era, has never been officially named. The title "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" came into existence through popular usage and acceptance. It has been referred to in that name in various enactments of the Congress, none of which officially designated the Tomb. Since most of World War I was fought on land by soldiers, this undoubtedly is the reason for the use of the term "Soldier."

Legislation relating to the return and interment of the unknowns of World War II and Korea and the Vietnam referred to "An American who lost his life while serving overseas in the Armed Forces of the United States." The remains interred in the Tomb could be those of a member of any of the services; therefore, use of the term "Soldier" in connection with the American unknowns of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam might not be appropriate as it was when used in connection with the unknown of World War I.

The authority to name any and all features within Arlington National Cemetery, such as drives, walks, special structures—includ-

ing the Tomb—rests with the Secretary of the Army. However, since 1959 it has been our stated position that inasmuch as this is a matter of national interest, the Department of the Army believes that the Congress should determine the official title of the Tomb. This position was restated in a letter from Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, Jr., to Chairman G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery on June 10, 1987.

The enactment of the proposed legislation will have no fiscal impact on the Department of Defense.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my remarks, and I will be pleased to respond to your questions at this time.

[The prepared statement of General Hilbert appears on p. 61.]

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you very much General Hilbert. If it's all right with you we will proceed with the other witnesses.

We will move on to Colonel Ryan. Welcome back to our subcommittee, Colonel. I'm happy to have you with us.

STATEMENT OF COL. WILLIAM E. RYAN, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND FINANCE, AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

Colonel RYAN. Thank you.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, the American Battle Monuments Commission welcomes this opportunity to appear before you at this oversight hearing.

As you have copies of my prepared statement, with your permission I will summarize its contents to conserve time.

The commission's primary functions are to commemorate the services of the American Armed Forces where they have served since April 6, 1917—that's when the United States entered into World War I—and to design, construct, operate, and maintain, permanent American military burial grounds in foreign countries, to control the design and construction of appropriate monuments and markers in foreign countries by other U.S. citizens, both public and private, and to encourage adequate maintenance of such monuments and markers by their sponsors.

Presently, the commission administers, operates, and maintains 24 permanent American military cemetery memorials and 14 separate monuments in 11 foreign countries and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, and four memorials here in the United States.

The American Battle Monuments Commission is extremely proud of its shrines. Without question they are among the most beautiful and meticulously maintained cemetery memorials in the world. As a consequence, the commission receives hundreds of letters each year expressing appreciation of them and the empathy and dedication of its personnel.

Regarding our personnel authorization, the Office of Management and Budget has reduced it to a bare bones level, which severely limits the commission's ability to meet its responsibilities for maintenance and care of its facilities. It does not appear that OMB has any plans to increase our current authorization from its bare bones level of 387 to the 398 personnel authorized by Public Law 96-385.

Late in 1985 the U.S. Government, in concert with certain of its allies, took strong steps to reduce the value of the dollar on foreign markets in an attempt to make U.S. goods more competitive overseas. The resultant severe weakening of the U.S. dollar in Europe has had a crippling effect upon commission operations, as approximately 90 percent of ABMC's appropriations is expended in foreign countries. For example, the French franc has gone from over 10 francs to a dollar to 6 or less at this time. This means that the salaries of our French employees and all purchases there, have risen 66 percent in their cost to us.

This year, fiscal year 1987, the shortage of funds resulting from the lower rates of exchange is more than $2 million. A supplement of $1,424,00 to offset the losses in part has been approved, but the prospects of its passage in sufficient time to be of significant assistance to the commission are not good.

In the meantime, in an effort to cope, insofar as possible, with these severe losses, the following measures have been taken in Europe and the Mediterranean: capital labor has been curtailed; capital improvement projects have been postponed indefinitely; replacement of worn-out an inoperable equipment has been suspended; purchases of supplies and spare parts have been limited to those needed to perform minimum maintenance; and lastly, repairs, other than those of an emergency nature, have been suspended.

At the present moment we are short $150,000 to complete the fiscal year without furloughing some personnel, which would be in violation of most of the treaty agreements with the host countries.

The level of care and maintenance of these shrines, in the meantime, has deteriorated significantly, and if prolonged much longer it will start to become readily apparent.

The Department of Defense and the Department of State are not similarly affected because they have currency fluctuation accounts. This is an oversimplification, but essentially such accounts work as follows: transaction in foreign currencies utilize a budgeted rate of exchange as a standard for obligations. If the exchange rate when the purchase is made exceeds the budgeted rate, the difference in dollars is deposited in the currency fluctuation account. If the converse is true, then the additional funds needed are withdrawn from that account.

H.R. 2653, which is presently being considered by this committee, would establish such an account for the American Battle Monuments Commission. It would eliminate a long-standing problem for the commission, and ensure that the commission is provided the wherewithal to perform the care and maintenance of the shrines for which it is responsible and that is expected by the Congress when its appropriation is enacted. In other words, it will allow us to do those things for which we budgeted. We have not been able to perform all of the projects that were planned.

Except for the 5 years when the dollar appreciated when the annual appropriation was enacted because of depreciating exchange rates.

Such an account is desperately needed at this time, and your support is strongly solicited.

On October 28, 1986, Public Law 99-572 was signed authorizing the American Battle Monuments Commission to erect a memorial in the Washington, D.C. environment honoring members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in Korea during the Korean War. The legislation requires the memorial to be funded with monies obtained through private contributions, except for $1 million which is authorized to be appropriated for design, site preparation, associated administrative costs, and partial construction. Estimated overall cost of the memorial is $6 million. To date, 1,819 contributions have been received in the amount of $1,268,456.

Madam Chairwoman, this completes my summary. I'll be happy to answer any questions that you and the other members of the subcommittee may care to ask.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Ryan appears on p. 72.]

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you, Colonel, very much. I would assume, General, that Mr. Costanzo will be available for questions, as well as we proceed here.

General HILBERT. Correct.

Miss KAPTUR. I would like to ask General Hilbert: you mentioned the more restricted eligibility requirements that have been in effect at Arlington since 1967. Could you give us any more detail on what those requirements are, the eligibility requirements?

General HILBERT. If you permit me, Madam Chairwoman, I'd like to ask Mr. Costanzo to answer that question.

Mr. COSTANZO. Madam Chairwoman, there are several different categories of individuals who are currently eligible for burial in Arlington Cemetery, the first, of course, being any person who dies while on active military service. The second category would be former members of the Armed Forces who have retired, completed their tour of 20 years or more, or who have retired for disability. And the third would be honorably discharged veterans who have received any of this Nation's highest awards for valor: the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Air Force Cross, Silver Star, or the Purple Heart. Or any honorably discharged veteran separated before October 1949 who was separated for a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more; and in addition to that, any honorably discharged veteran who has held national elective office—President, Vice President, Congresswoman, Congressman, Senators—and appointed positions at Level I or Level II are eligible for ground burial.

In addition to that, we have at Arlington National Cemetery a Columbarium. For those of you who are not familiar with that term, that is a structure where cremated remains are placed. Any veteran whose last period of service was terminated honorably is eligible to have their cremated remains inurned in Arlington National Cemetery.

Miss KAPTUR. Are you aware that the Department of Defense or Department of the Army have plans to expand that land area of Arlington?

Mr. COSTANZO. We have 50 acres of undeveloped land which was formerly part of the south post of Fort Myer that area is scheduled for development in fiscal year 1992, but beyond that there is no other land available for expansion.

Miss KAPTUR. Your testimony indicated that there were 4,040 burials at Arlington Cemetery last year. What proportion would you say represents service disabled veterans or servicemen versus retired military personnel? Just ballpark.

Mr. COSTANZO. Approximately 1,000 of the 4,000. About 3,000 of them come under the restrictive eligibility criteria, and about 1,000 come under the criteria for inurnment in the Columbarium.

Miss KAPTUR. When you went through the criteria you talked about recipients of the Silver Star and so forth. Why wasn't the Bronze Star included?

Mr. COSTANZO. I really can't answer. I don't know. I would assume that—the Bronze Star medal is not always awarded for valor. For instance, I think the award of the Combat Infantry Badge automatically confers the award of a Bronze Star.

Miss KAPTUR. I appreciate the testimony, General, that you gave on the background of the tomb at Arlington. When officials of the cemetery, or guides, refer to the tomb, what terminology do they presently use?

Mr. COSTANZO. I think it's a combination of both. Sometimes it's referred to as "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier." More recently it's come to be known as "Tomb of the Unknowns."

Miss KAPTUR. So they are becoming more common usage?

Mr. COSTANZO. Yes.

Miss KAPTUR. And do you feel that that is a suitable description, Mr. Costanzo?

Mr. COSTANZO. Well, of course I support the Secretary's position that this is such an important issue Congress should decide that issue, but I certainly have no objections to that term.

Miss KAPTUR. I also wanted to ask this question of you, Mr. Costanzo, because of your exceptional knowledge about cemetery operations. We have asked the Veterans' Administration to comment on the effectiveness of grave liners in the national cemeteries, and the National Concrete Burial Vault representatives are also here today. I wonder if you would care to share your own perspectives on this? Would you consider grave liners more cost effective, either in general or in certain circumstances?

Mr. COSTANZO. I would think that it would be a tremendous savings for the cemeteries if all the burials were made in either a vault or a concrete box. It certainly would reduce maintenance costs in the future.

Miss KAPTUR. So that would be of benefit at Arlington?

Mr. COSTANZO. Absolutely. No question about it.

Miss KAPTUR. All right. Let me move on to another member. Mr. Harris, do you have any questions of any of the witnesses?

Mr. HARRIS. I just wanted to compliment the General on the background information, which will be very helpful to us, especially for the new members of the committee. I'd like to add my congratulations to the job that you do. I had an opportunity to tour the cemetery, and I know, sir, you keep it well. If a cemetery can be beautiful, that one is beautiful.

Colonel RYAN. Thank you.

Mr. HARRIS. I was very impressed with it. I didn't get to see the one at the punch bowl, but I'm very supportive of you in your efforts and certainly want to do what I can to help you on that.

Mr. HARRIS. And I hope you remember our efforts in Corregidor.
General HILBERT. Yes, sir.
Mr. HARRIS. Okay.
Miss KAPTUR. Congressman Davis?
Mr. DAVIS. Yes, Madam Chairwoman. I just say that the Colonel has made an obvious case for the currency fluctuation problem. It's just incredible that we would cut back on maintenance, cut back on—people traveling to Europe to see their loved one's final resting place—that we would even think about cutting back on making that cemetery the most beautiful possible place that it could be. Congressman Harris is absolutely right, they are beautiful places—for the living as much as for the dead. To honor those dead that fell in battle—overseas especially—is the most important thing, I think, we could do, to nothing else than fly the American flag in this country, and to honor those dead. To even think about degrading the force that is taking care of that, abandoning maintenance and emergence of all the horror stories that you mentioned is just unconscionable. It a very, very good case that I will certainly support, and I know this committee will.
Miss KAPTUR. Mrs. Patterson?
Mrs. PATTERSON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I'd like to ask Colonel Ryan: this may not be relevant to what we're discussing today, but I have had some calls in reference to the memorial for the Korean War dead, and wondered if it has been finalized where that memorial will be. I understand that there's been some discussion either of it being at Haynes Point or in the—
Colonel RYAN. The Commission was directed by Public Law 99-572 to erect a Korean War Memorial in the Washington, D.C. environment. Shortly thereafter, another public law was passed, Public Law 99-652, which was a generic piece of legislation that established guidelines for the erections of monuments and markers in the Washington, D.C. area.

It took the available sites for monuments and markers in Washington, D.C., and divided them into two groups or areas: Area No. 1 generally being the mall area between the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial plus the area between the Jefferson Memorial and the White House; and Area No. 2 being some scattered parcels of land around the city, plus land on the periphery of Washington, D.C., such as Haynes Point, the land near the Iwo Jima Monument and Rosslyn.

Unfortunately, that piece of legislation also said that war memorials should be in Area No. 2, which would be on the periphery, generally, of Washington, D.C. However, there was a caveat in the legislation which said that if the Secretary of Interior thought the monument was of prominent and lasting significance to the Nation, and his advisory commission also thought so, then the Secretary of Interior could petition the Congress to pass a law authorizing placement of the Korean War Memorial in the Mall area, or in Area No. 1. We appeared before the advisory commission of the Secretary of Interior last April 23. They subsequently voted unanimously to recommend to the Secretary of Interior that he so petition the Congress. I do not think he has done this, as yet.

There's one problem: this legislation must be passed or enacted within 150 days of the Congress being petitioned, otherwise it's con-

sidered disapproval of the request. So the commission requests all your support when this legislation appears.

Miss KAPTUR. Will the gentlelady yield? We wrote a letter—several Members of Congress—to the Secretary of Interior on this, and to date have received no reply. Obviously, Colonel, you don't have any indication of what's being discussed in this regard.

Colonel RYAN. No, we do not.

Mrs. PATTERSON. I certainly would appreciate the information, because I have received some calls and some letters on this. Let us know. I'd like to work with the other members of the committee.

Miss KAPTUR. Yes, we intend to. In fact, we should probably make a phone call and find out what happened to our letter.

Mr. DAVIS. Maybe we ought to send a letter with a banner or two attached, then they'll chat with us.

Mrs. PATTERSON. Or a lady or two attached.

Mr. DAVIS. That's what I meant.

Miss KAPTUR. I wanted to ask, since Quantico was designated as a backup area to Arlington, whether there are any plans to change the burial criteria at all to allow for additional veteran burials in Arlington and at Quantico? I'd just be curious as to that.

Mr. COSTANZO. No. There are no plans within the Department of Army to change the eligibility criteria.

Miss KAPTUR. And I've received questions, Mr. Costanzo, from Vietnam veterans in my own district who were lucky enough not to be disabled in Vietnam who have requested burial in Arlington, and, of course, they don't meet the criteria. I'm sure there are veterans of other confrontations who feel the same way. Is there any review being given to using Quantico or to expanding Arlington? You say there's not land available there beyond the 50 acres you said that still remains?

Mr. COSTANZO. That is correct. However, Madam Chairwoman, you may recall, or the record will bear out, that Public Law 93–43—that transferred the national cemeteries from the Department of the Army to the Veterans' Administration, directed that a comprehensive joint study be made between the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense, and to make a recommendation to the Congress relative to two items: whether Arlington should be a part of the Veterans' Administration, and whether or not the eligibility criteria that was established for Arlington should remain.

As a result of that joint study it was recommended that the eligibility criteria for Arlington remain restrictive, but at the same time they would open a new national cemetery under the Veterans' Administration within the Capitol region. That resulted in the establishment of Quantico to take care of those veterans who were not otherwise eligible for burial in Arlington, so that there is a national cemetery in the capitol region available for all veterans.

So for that reason there is no plan to change; and if they did, the burial rate at Arlington would increase dramatically to the proportions where it would seriously affect our ability to conduct the ceremonial activities that are traditional at Arlington, and at the same time accommodate the almost 4 million visitors.

Miss KAPTUR. Also, based on the numbers you gave us, what year do you project you will be full?

Mr. COSTANZO. About the year 2020.

Miss KAPTUR. That isn't very long from now.

Mr. COSTANZO. No ma'am.

Miss KAPTUR. When was that study done by the VA and Army?

Mr. COSTANZO. It was submitted to the Congress the year following enactment of Public Law 93–43. I think it was the first session of 1974.

Miss KAPTUR. I would hope that this country would never get in conflicts in the future, but Arlington is such a world shrine, really. What happens after the year 2020?

Mr. COSTANZO. I hope they will find some additional land to expand Arlington.

Miss KAPTUR. I think that's something that we ought to look at. They tell us many of us will be on Social Security by then.

Mr. COSTANZO. Maybe we can move the Pentagon over a few yards and take over some of that land.

Miss KAPTUR. That is not very long from now.

Mr. COSTANZO. No ma'am.

Miss KAPTUR. Well, let us take a look at that particular question: the future of Arlington Cemetery beyond the year 2020.

Mr. COSTANZO. Well, now, Madam Chairwoman, when I mention the year 2020 that applies for ground burials only. The use of the Columbarium will permit us to continue with the handling of cremated remains for many years beyond that date.

Miss KAPTUR. I just have to say for the record, and I know every member shares this: if people from your district come up to Arlington National Cemetery that's what they remember. I remember as a kid coming to Washington for the first time and that's what I recalled. Suddenly, Arlington reflects so much of what the country is all about, who had fought for it. It's just such an important symbol of freedom—

Mr. COSTANZO. Yes, ma'am.

Miss KAPTUR.It deserves every attention that we can give it and the Department of Army can give it. I just had a group from my district come up—a school group—a few weeks ago, and we were there to present a wreath. This school does this every year, and the way that the people were treated by the personnel up there, I have to really commend all of you.

Mr. COSTANZO. Madam Chairwoman, may I take this opportunity, then, to extend an invitation to you and the members of the committee to perhaps come out some time when your schedule permits and allow us to give you a very comprehensive tour so that you can see first-hand what we are doing there at Arlington.

Miss KAPTUR. Oh, that would be wonderful. We'd love to work with you on that, Mr. Costanzo. I think that would be a wonderful opportunity for all of us.

I wanted to ask Colonel Ryan, a second question. You mentioned that $6 million would be the total cost of constructing a Korean War Memorial, with $5 million coming in from donations, and you had a little over $1 million. I was unaware that there was already $1 million collected. How long do you think it would take us to collect the additional money from private sources?

Colonel RYAN. I don't know. We only have 5 years—there's a sunset date in the legislation that says after 5 years, if we do not

have a construction contract, that we cannot build the memorial, and we must have the $5 million to do so. We received $1,193,000 from Hyundai, Motor America, and its dealers. The donations from the country, at large, have been somewhat slow, as you can see, as we have a total of $1,268,000 including the Hyundai contribution.

Hopefully we're going to meet our goal. We understand some of the Veterans' organizations have collected monies for it, and that they plan to present it to us at some time in the future. This will help quite a bit.

Miss KAPTUR. Colonel, I had one final question on the exchange rate fluctuations: do you think that the new type of account that I'm sure we will support as a full committee here will help reduce the request for supplemental appropriations in the future, or will it just tide us over the near term?

Colonel RYAN. Oh, I think it would eliminate such a supplemental request in the future, unless the supplemental request is for pay increases.

Miss KAPTUR. All right.

Colonel RYAN. Or some emergency where we needed funds.

Miss KAPTUR. Do any other members of the subcommittee have questions?

[No response.]

All right. We really want to thank you gentlemen for taking the time to be with us today, and for your excellent testimony. All of it will be made part of the full record. We accept your invitation to visit Arlington. We would love to do that, and we'll try.

Mr. COSTANZO. Please come soon.

Before I leave I'd like to leave with you this most recent book that's been written on Arlington, title: "In Honored Glory." I think you'll find it very interesting.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Costanzo.

Colonel Ryan, I am personally going to call the Secretary of Interior, because we've been waiting for this letter too long, and we're going to follow up on that Korean War Memorial issue.

Colonel RYAN. Thank you, and please let us know what happens.

Miss KAPTUR. All right, we'll do it.

Thank you.

Moving right along, if we could, we'd like to call Mr. Arthur Hamerschlag, Deputy Chief of Memorial Affairs at the Veterans' Administration. I'm glad to have you back with us, Mr. Hamerschlag.

STATEMENT OF ARTHUR S. HAMERSCHLAG, DEPUTY CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION; ACCOMPANIED BY DEAN HOLT, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. We appreciate the briefing that you gave the committee several weeks ago when we first organized.

The gentleman accompanying you is Mr. Dean Holt? Is that correct?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. That's correct.

Miss KAPTUR. And could you give your title for the official record, please, sir?

Mr. HOLT. I'm Executive Assistant to the Chief Memorial Affairs Director of the Veterans' Administration.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you very much.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Good morning, Madam Chairwoman.

Miss KAPTUR. Good morning.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. It's a pleasure to be here. As you know, Dean Holt is here with me. I understand my full statement will be entered into the record.

Miss KAPTUR. Absolutely. Your prepared statement will be inserted in the record immediately following your oral presentation.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. With your permission I will offer a brief summary and, of course, be glad to answer any questions you might have.

A new director has recently been appointed for the national cemetery system, Mr. Wil Ebel, and he will be officially starting July 12. He's asked me to convey his personal regards to you and members of the subcommittee.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you. And ours to him.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. We look forward to working with him.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. This year marks the 125th anniversary of the national cemetery system. The system is comprised of 110 national cemeteries, 65 of which are open to new interments. Three new national cemeteries are under development in West Virginia, Florida, and Northern California. On Memorial Day this year we dedicated the 110th national cemetery at Fort Mitchell, Alabama, and were honored to have Representative Claude Harris, a member of this subcommittee, with us that day, as well as many other distinguished officials.

Miss KAPTUR. If I could just interrupt one second. Congressman Harris has told us all about it.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. I hope his reports were favorable.

Miss KAPTUR. They certainly were.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Our workload in the national cemetery system has been growing steadily. It's expected to increase for several years until the turn of the next century. Interments reached a record high of 52,000 in fiscal year 1986. That's a 41 percent increase in 10 years' time. A major reason for this workload growth is the aging of the U.S. veteran population and the increasing number of veteran deaths. This trend is expected to continue until well into the next century. For example, in 1986 the median age of the veteran population was 53, and the number of veteran deaths estimated at 426,000. By the year 2010 the median age will be up to 61.7 years, and the number of veteran deaths are estimated to be 610,000.

DMA has taken some major initiatives to help respond to this increasing demand for service. For example, seven new national cemeteries have been opened in the last 10 years. We have also been able to reopen some cemeteries that had been or were about to close, either by accepting donations of land, or by reclaiming existing land that was previously considered unusable.

Another innovative approach has been the garden niche concept. Using this concept, small three-foot by three-foot plots are used for the interment of cremated remains. This allows us to use land along walkways, next to walls, and on steep slopes which could not be used for full casketed burials. The garden niches have made it possible to start serving people again at places like Los Angeles, Fort Rosecransz in San Diego, and at the Presidio in San Francisco, all of which had been closed for a number of years. This concept has been very well received, and gives next-of-kin a chance to bury their loved ones close to home at the national cemetery of their choice.

Because of the small size and location of the plots, garden niches are memorialized with flat markers. Uprights on these three-by-three plots would be crowded just a few inches apart, or might be backed up against a wall, trees, or other obstructions. Mowing equipment could not pass through the section. We are concerned that the current language of Public Law 99–576 regarding upright markers could force us to stop using the garden niche concept once existing sections are full. The subcommittee may wish to consider legislation that would clarify VA's authority to continue using flat markers for this particular purpose.

Madam Chairwoman, your letter specifically asked about grave liners as a means of improving efficiency. Grave liners were first introduced into the national cemetery system in fiscal year 1975 on an experimental basis. The results were positive, and their use gradually expanded. By fiscal year 1980, however, the average cost had risen from $50 to about $82 a unit. Because of the escalating cost and fiscal restraints it was at that time determined that DMA would only provide grave liners at three of our large regional cemeteries: Calverton, in New York; Riverside, California; and Massachusetts, where it is most cost-effective to use liners.

Of course, we also permit next-of-kin to provide grave liners or vaults at private expense at any location. Grave liners are generally recognized as a good way to reduce maintenance costs over a period of time. It is a very common, if not predominant, practice for private and denominational cemeteries to require them.

Grave liners are seen as an advantage for four basic reasons: first, grave liners reduce maintenance requirements by preventing the ground from sinking over a collapsing casket; two, they help prevent headstones from sinking and tilting; three, they reduce the possibility that visitors and employees will fall when walking over uneven ground; and, four, perhaps most importantly in my mind, they help assure that grounds meet the high standards of appearance that the public expects whenever they may choose to visit a national cemetery. In other words, with the use of grave liners you don't really have ground under renovation at any given time.

Madam Chairwoman, you also asked about implementation of Public Law 99–576, which requires that beginning January 1st of this year grave markers used in the national cemetery system are to be upright. The law provided exceptions for cemeteries which would close within 5 years, or for burial sections where flat markers had already been established.

The provision of this law really responded to a large number of complaints that were received when the Department began con-

verting cemeteries which had traditionally used the upright headstones to a flat style. With this in mind, we have moved quickly to get those same cemeteries back to the upright style as quickly as possible. Our intent has been to comply with the spirit of the law as well as the letter of the law.

Twenty-seven cemeteries were identified as previously having used upright headstones and then converted to flat markers. Of these, three will be closed before 1991, and would be exempt from the provisions of the law, but I'm pleased to report that 17 of the other 24 cemeteries are now back to using upright headstones, and by this fall the other 7 cemeteries will also be using upright headstones. In essence, we decided to move back to using uprights at those cemeteries as quickly as we could do so administratively and operationally.

The remaining cemeteries covered by the law, those which have always had flat markers, or those which have used them for many years without complaints, will phase back to the upright style as existing sections are filled, as provided by law.

As you know, Public Law 99-576 required the VA to submit a report to Congress on the national cemetery system. I'd like to summarize the conclusions of that report briefly.

To meet the future burial needs of our veterans, a five-point plan was developed; that is: first, to encourage expanded participation in the State Cemetery Grants Program; second, phased development of presently owned but undeveloped land in open national cemeteries; third, to expand the garden niche concept, and here, again, I'd like to express our concerns about our ability to use flat markers in the garden niche areas we've established; the fourth part of the plan is limited expansion of existing national cemeteries, that is by acquiring land adjacent to existing national cemeteries as we have in the past through donation and acceptance of donated land or surplus land—and the study also says, where it's clearly indicated and cost-effective to do so, that we would consider purchasing land in some circumstances; and, fifth, to review the regional cemetery policy that has governed the national cemetery system since 1973.

Madam Chairwoman, the study of the national cemetery system has been submitted to the Congress. I've heard it referred to many times already today. I hope it will be helpful. Of course, we'd be pleased to brief other members or the staff at any time in more detail on that study, if you would like.

With regard to legislative issues before the subcommittee today, I would, of course, defer to the Department of the Army and the ABMC on H.R. 1987 and 2653. With regard to Wood, Wisconsin, the VA supports the proposal to permit flat markers in the new expansion area of that cemetery. This was actually requested by the VA medical center, which prior to passage of Public Law 99-576 had made the use of flat markers a condition of transferring acreage from the medical center to the cemetery. The land in question is an integral part of the medical center grounds, and the medical center believes that the site of the upright markers so close by the medical center could have a negative impact on patient care. Without the use of that land the cemetery would be forced to close.

The other legislative proposal involves an amendment to the Title 38 to permit VA to make improvements on property adjacent

to the national cemetery in order to permit safe ingress or egress. The VA has similar authority for medical centers. This would simply add comparable language for cemeteries. We support this proposal strongly.

Madam Chairwoman, that concludes my summary. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hamerschlag appears on p. 79.]

Miss KAPTUR. Mr. Hamerschlag, I understand that because there is going to be a new Chief Memorial Affairs Director that you will be moving to other duties within the agency?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Well, I will resume my full duties as the Deputy Chief Memorial Affairs Director, and perhaps spend more of my time on operations and less time on some of the outside duties of the Chief Memorial Affairs Director.

Miss KAPTUR. All right. Very good. Well, we wish you well in that—

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Thank you, very much.

Miss KAPTUR.—and we want to thank you for the wonderful response that you've always given to this subcommittee, and the leadership that you've provided within the agency.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. I wanted to first begin by asking: you've sat and listened to the concerns of the several members of Congress that have testified concerning their own States—Congressman Stump and Holloway and McEwen—and I'm just wondering what would be the VA's response to their concerns?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Well, if I may take the interest of the members as a vote of confidence, I would have to say we're truly flattered that they think we're doing such a fine job that they would like national cemeteries in their areas.

As you know, up until now we've been guided by the regional concept, which established one—or called for one—large national cemetery in each of the ten standard Federal regions. As the study makes clear, that concept has been completed, if you will, with the opening of the cemetery in Fort Mitchell, Alabama, and essentially what we are saying is that we know that concept may no longer serve, and what we need to do is undertake a study to decide what our future policy will be.

The law required us to identify ten areas of the country that could use a national cemetery based on demographic need. But the decision has to be made along the lines of how many of those cemeteries should be built, in what order, and so on. It's not only a question of need, but also a matter of the fiscal ability of the Government to provide those cemeteries. Those are the kinds of issues I think a study that we will plan to undertake will have to try to address.

Miss KAPTUR. How does this relate to the House Appropriations Committee's funding of three environmental impact studies in Cleveland, Chicago, and Seattle-Tacoma? How long do you think that will take? How much time is really involved in doing those studies? Will they be able to be conducted at the same time? What is your time table on those studies?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. If the Senate concurred and, of course, the President signed the bill, we would undertake those studies as di-

rected. We could do them simultaneously. Generally it takes, I would say, about 18 months to do an environmental impact statement.

I would like to say that there's a number of steps in that process, the first of which is to identify, as required by law, all possible alternatives or sites for a national cemetery. We heard discussions of possible sites in the Cleveland, Ohio area, for example. The EIS process would require us to identify all potential sites for a national cemetery, and to evaluate them environmentally. We would make use of that process to also look—

Miss KAPTUR. Would that involve the whole State, sir?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. It would depend. We would be able to define, administratively, the area we wanted to look at to study. What we've done is focus on the Cleveland-Akron area as the center of veteran population in the State. Our statistics indicate that most users of a national cemetery will come from about a hundred-mile radius, so we normally would try to be within 100 miles, if not closer, of that center of veteran population.

Our interest there would be to locate the cemetery where it would serve the greatest number of veterans.

Miss KAPTUR. Now that the VA has submitted its report on the future demands of the national cemetery system and the 10 areas with the greatest need for additional burial space, what do you propose as your next step? What happens next now?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Well, our next step would be to undertake the study I just described. Of course, if the Congress goes ahead and provides money for environmental impact statements at those three cemeteries we would start that process, but I think you must realize that the Administration's policy right now is that there will be no further national cemeteries begun or initiated by the Administration until our policy review is completed.

Miss KAPTUR. Mr. Harris, do you have any questions of the witness?

Mr. HARRIS. Just one statement, and then maybe a question. I want to compliment you for the job that was done at Fort Mitchell, Alabama.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Thank you very much.

Mr. HARRIS. It's going to be a very important area for that region. It has such a historical significance anyhow. I wanted to—I noticed from your testimony, I just want to encourage the use of the upright markers. I know that's been sort of a back-and-forth situation, but touring the national cemetery at Manilla I made the remark to—I guess it was Congressman Montgomery—but it looked like that those crosses were put in with the transit. I mean, you could just look down the line, and it was so impressive to me, and the same is true of Arlington. I just think that in looking at a military cemetery, or a veterans' cemetery, I just expect to see crosses. I don't know—I just associate one with the other, and I would hope that we don't get away from that any more than we can help.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. If I might, when we began going to the flat markers it was primarily for issues of cost constraints and productivity. The private sector uses them predominantly, and we were looking at it in those terms. I think in retrospect the Congress has spoken with Public Law 99-576. It was also an emotional and aes-

thetic issue, and we understand that fully. That is part of the reason we moved as quickly as we could back to the uprights, as I indicated in my testimony.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you. Congressman Davis?

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Well, Mr. Hamerschlag, I, too, want to congratulate you on your service, and I look forward to working with you in the future on this committee when you return to the Deputy Director's slot.

I'm grateful for the study that finally came out that confirmed what we had discussed privately, and other people have thought, that the Chicagoland area, of course my home State of Illinois, has the greatest need in the country. As you know, one of those environmental impact study amendments in the Appropriations Committee is for study of a proposed site that we've identified as the Joliet Arsenal property, and there's a pending amendment transferring land of excess nature in the view of the authorization bill, which may or may not see the light of day.

But, nevertheless, I'm a little astonished to hear you say that the impact study would take 18 months to do. Is there some reason for that, or is it just that you kind of loaf along with the thing? I don't mean that in the perjurative sense, don't misunderstand me. Do you just kind of take your time making sure it's all done exactly right?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. No. When we have to do those we do them as quickly as possible, because invariably there's a number of people who want to get to the outcome as quickly as they can.

Mr. DAVIS. Sure.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. It's simply a long and complicated process. We initially, as I said, must go through a site identification where we'd identify all potential sites.

Mr. DAVIS. Sure.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Traditionally,the VA has had a contractor on board. It's required that the contractor do a number of scientific studies. There are public hearings, a period of public comment. A draft statement is issued for the public to comment on; those comments must then be taken and a final statement issued, and so on. So it's just simply the requirements of law dictate that it takes just about that long to do it.

Mr. DAVIS. Is that timeframe ever compressed at all?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Rarely. We could tell you maybe we could do it in 15 months instead of 18 months, but the—

Mr. DAVIS. I just continually marvel at the lengths of time.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. I believe I have to give you realistic answers instead of what you may wan to hear.

Mr. DAVIS. I understand that it takes about four days to get a telephone call returned around this place. I'm not surprised that an environmental impact statement takes a year and a half. Well, I just would encourage you to compress the time for all three of those studies, assuming they succeed in the process and anything is signed by the President this year so that we could go on as quickly as possible.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Well, I can certainly give you my commitment to do those as quickly as possible if, in fact, the appropriation's passed in the House.

Mr. DAVIS. Great. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. Mrs. Patterson?

Mrs. PATTERSON. I, too, appreciate your informing me and enlightening me. I had two questions—well, two statements really. Number one: I really appreciated, in reading your statement, although you didn't mention it, the opportunity now that you take to make corrections and changes if there's an error on a tombstone, because I did have a family member from home that pointed that out to me. There was a change, I think, at the time of death. And also we have the problem sometimes of illiteracy in our area where it's very difficult to fill out forms. So I appreciate your taking the responsibility to make those corrections.

I share my good friend from Alabama's feeling of looking into a—looking across Arlington or one of our national cemeteries and seeing the crosses, but I also share your concern about the garden niches, because I realize that it's more than just aesthetic value that we have to think about. For plots that small it might not be feasible to have the uprights. So, I think there's a way to make it beautiful and meaningful, and to keep the feeling of the cross of the gravesites present, but in a case of the garden niches we might need to look at the markers being lain on the ground. So I'd be willing to work with you and other members of the committee on that special section.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Thank you very much. I think that would be a great deal of help to us.

Mrs. PATTERSON. Thank you very much.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you, Mrs. Patterson.

Mr. Hamerschlag, I wanted to ask you: of the 32 additional employees that were added by the House Appropriations Committee to be used within the national cemetery system, will that help you?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Absolutely. I think any program could always use additional resources. We would intend primarily to use those to staff the new cemetery in Florida, which should open about a year from now, and also to enable us to maintain the quality we try to maintain throughout the system.

Miss KAPTUR. I'm going to probably submit some questions in writing to you, but do you think that the grave liners would help you in maintaining a more efficient operation?

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Well, we are certainly convinced that they help us at the three cemeteries where we use them. I must tell you we have no current study—rigorous study—that would dictate in dollars and cents, or indicate in dollars and cents, exactly to what degree they pay for themselves, and so on. But I think a common sense look at it indicates that yes, they are certainly cost effective.

Miss KAPTUR. I have one final question: the Veterans' Administration has requested a legislative change to permit improvements on roadways adjacent to national cemeteries for the purpose of allowing people to enter and leave safely. It seems like a reasonable proposal. Would the Veterans' Administration be willing to request local governments to participate in the costs of such improvements?

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Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. We would certainly look to that. Many times they may or may not have the funds, but that would certainly be the intent: that we would help share the cost of a traffic light or a turning lane with the local government.

Miss KAPTUR. All right.

We'd like to thank you, gentlemen, again very much for spending time with us today, and to thank you very much for the wonderful, wonderful service that you give all over the country, and the world really. Thank you so very much.

Mr. HAMERSCHLAG. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. Our next witnesses are Mr. James Watkins, Jr., Past President of the American Cemetery Association, accompanied by Stephen Morgan, Executive Vice President; and Mr. Jerry J. Brown from the National Concrete Burial Vault Association, accompanied by Mr. Gerald Hardy, who is the Executive Director.

Gentlemen, we thank you so much for waiting this morning. We ask you, in the interest of time, if you could to keep within a 5-minute rule for your oral remarks, and your written testimony will be included for the full record.

We would begin with Mr. Watkins. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF JAMES E. WATKINS, JR. PAST PRESIDENT, AMERICAN CEMETERY ASSOCIATION; ACCOMPANIED BY STEPHEN L. MORGAN, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Mr. WATKINS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee.

I'm here today representing the American Cemetery Association, of which I'm a past president. I'm also a past president of the Indian State Cemetery Association.

Miss KAPTUR. Indiana, did you say? Which State?

Mr. WATKINS. Indiana.

Miss KAPTUR. Indiana?

Mr. WATKINS. Almost to Toledo.

Miss KAPTUR. Right.

Mr. WATKINS. And for another hat here I am a veteran navigator with the Strategic Air Command, separated with rank of Captain. I'm currently a member of the American Legion.

With me this morning is Steve Morgan, our Executive Vice President.

Miss KAPTUR. Welcome.

Mr. WATKINS. We appreciate this opportunity to testify, and request our complete written testimony be entered in the record. At the conclusion of the testimony I'll be glad to answer any questions you might have.

I sense in the testimony so far today perhaps a foregone conclusion that there will be some expansion of the national cemetery system. We're not opposed to this system or interment rights for certain veterans in national cemetery. I say "certain veterans"—we heard this morning that Arlington had to restrict and define veterans they can serve.

When the national cemetery system was created in 1973, Congress acknowledged that these cemeteries did not exist in a vacuum, but complimented other forms of burial benefits which

used resources already available through private, religious, and municipal cemeteries. We feel that any plans to expand the national cemetery system should continue to recognize the vast cemetery resources already in existence throughout the United States.

Public Law 99-576 recognized that the Veterans' Affairs administrator has existing authority to establish new national cemeteries in specific sites across the country. However, while the VA administrator has the authority to recommend sites, Congress is responsible for appropriating the funds to construct and maintain new cemeteries. We believe that a comprehensive study of the national cemetery system needs to be undertaken by Congress prior to the approval of any future funding.

Madam Chairwoman, you have stated the principal problem this morning in your remark earlier concerning Toledo versus Cleveland versus Columbus. The VA, in its report, has defined a 100-mile radius as being reasonably served—for a veteran to be reasonably served by the system. Our information indicates that while that's true, the usage falls off very rapidly over 50 miles. I don't know precisely how much, but I think they would concur that it falls off.

Miss KAPTUR. That's very helpful information.

Mr. WATKINS. This is a feeling that we have from our members who are in areas where there are national cemeteries.

So we're back to the problem. If we're to do the job that everybody wants done we'd have to put out national cemeteries the way we have post offices, and obviously that's out of the question.

We applaud and heartily support some of the conclusions stated in the recently-issued VA report. Specifically, we endorse the VA's proposal to conduct a policy review to investigate other options beyond the simple creation of more national cemeteries. The law which mandated this report, however, failed to require the VA to investigate certain areas critical to establishing a comprehensive understanding of the future needs of the system.

For example, the report does not discuss what I consider to be the most important issue of all, and that is the liability of annual cemetery maintenance expenses for the entire system. These costs would include gravesite maintenance, road repair, water and drainage systems, and related administrative operations.

Colonel Ryan's remarks earlier I think greatly point out the problems. The American Battle Monuments does a tremendous job. I am proud to be in the same business with them. They are running into this very problem of inflation and continuing expense, which is now an unfunded expenses if it's funded annually.

In the private sector we know that ongoing maintenance expenses are constantly escalating due to increased labor cost, equipment replacement, and the uncertain effects of future inflation. Most private cemeteries are required by State laws to create maintenance care trust funds to provide a continuing source of income for future use and defraying expenses. The national cemetery system has no such trust fund and must rely solely on outlays of tax dollars each year forever to meet continually-rising maintenance expenses. Expanding the Federal cemetery system only worsens this problem.

In the absence of a comprehensive data we do not believe it is in the best interest of the American taxpayers, including veterans, for Congress to appropriate additional funds for an ever-expanding system. We're not opposed to the expansion, but only after a very careful study and review.

Second, the Government has no idea how many of the 27.8 million veterans alive today wish to be buried in a national cemetery. We are particularly concerned that the extent to which younger generations of veterans prefer national cemetery interment is an unknown factor.

Third, any projection of the anticipated need for future national cemeteries must recognize the steadily increasing cremation rate in the United States. VA's current rate of 16 percent strongly suggests the private sector estimates of 30 percent by the year 2000 may be conservative.

The increased preference for cremation will have a direct effect on acreage requirements of existing national cemeteries, and raise significant questions of the need for additional cemeteries beyond the year 2000. Again, General Hilbert's testimony this morning was very closely attuned to that.

In addition, we are finding—I see my time is getting very short here—we're finding a great increase of what you might call nontraditional forms of memorialization.

The principal thing is that we urge this committee to require a comprehensive study by the Veterans' Administration and the General Accounting Office which thoroughly explores all the alternatives available providing future veterans' burial benefits, including financial considerations.

Thank you. I'll be glad to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Watkins appears on p. 87.]

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Watkins. And thank you for staying within the time period.

Mr. Brown, why don't we proceed to you, and then we'll open it up to questions.

STATEMENT OF JERRY J. BROWN, VA/NCBVA RELATIONS COMMITTEE, NATIONAL CONCRETE BURIAL VAULT ASSOCIATION; ACCOMPANIED BY GERALD HARDY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mr. BROWN. Thank you. On behalf of Mr. Hardy, myself, and the entire National Concrete Burial Vault Association, we're profoundly grateful to have the opportunity to submit some information to you people.

Mr. Hamerschlag did a superb job of outlining the fiscal proprieties of requiring outer interment receptacles in national cemeteries.

First of all I might say that probably there's no product more esoteric or little-known than a burial vault, and just for the information of the committee, an outer interment receptacle, a burial vault or grave liner, is the outer enclosure that houses the casket, primarily to reduce maintenance costs for cemeteries. To enlighten the committee further, we are in a position of strongly recommending the use of outer interment receptacles for burials at all national cemeteries. For fiscal reasons, on-going maintenance, the contin-

ued beautification of the national cemeteries, the safety factor of using burial vaults and/or grave liners, and then, finally, the dignity factor.

Currently, under the Public Law 99-576, which VA cemeteries are necessitates a number of disinterments from the flat marker sections to the upright. I speak specifically with respect to the national cemetery, Fort Snelling, in Minneapolis. There are approximately 7,000 deceased persons have been interred at Fort Snelling in the flat marker section since 1983. It is estimated that approximately one-third of those interred in the flat marker sections will at the request of next-of-kin, require relocation. This becomes a problem when no grave liner or burial vault has been used, in terms of the disinterment and the relocation.

In 1975 the national cemetery systems memorial affairs, under the Veterans' Administration, deemed it advisable to initiate a pilot program to require burial vaults and/or grave liners for interment in all national cemeteries. This program lasted for 5 years, and in 1980 the OMB decided that the program was becoming too expensive.

So in light of the fact that grave liners and burial vaults currently are not defined as a veterans' benefit, per se, by the Memorial Affairs national cemetery system, and because of the potential VA budgetary constraints and adverse tax period reaction, the National Concrete Burial Vault Association recommends the following:

One, that the Veterans' Administration issue a mandate requiring the use of outer interment receptacles in all national cemeteries, primarily for fiscal reasons. Just for your information, it has been established that in a normal interment situation, without some form of outer interment receptacle, that grave will require restoration—backfilling, tamping, reseeding or resodding—anywhere from five to eleven times during the life cycle of that grave. This, of course, becomes a problem from a maintenance standpoint.

We believe that the selection, purchase, and providing of burial vaults or grave liners should fall in the area of the private sector, and become the responsibility of next-of-kin as in the traditional process that exists nationwide. I would suspect that probably in the neighborhood of 90 percent of the cemeteries in the private sector nationwide have a requirement that some form of a grave liner or burial vault be used. If, for whatever reason, the Memorial Affairs do not issue an outer interment receptacle requirement for national cemeteries, we feel that a specific recommendation and position of preference statement be issued as part of the national cemetery procedures, rules, and regulations, which would, in essence, underscore the feasibility and cost effectiveness of using grave liners.

Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you very much, Mr. Brown.

I'd like to now proceed with questions.

Mr. Watkins, could you describe in a little more detail how the concept of a trust for cemetery maintenance could work with regard to the national cemetery system?

Mr. WATKINS. Well, let me first describe the trust for cemetery maintenance, Madam Chairwoman.

The State law in almost all States, requires that a portion of the funds received for the sale of burial rights be placed into irrevoca-

ble trust funds, the income from which is dedicated to the maintenance of the cemetery.

What we're talking about here is something that's been learned from bitter experience from Colonial times forward: cemeteries were created that became public eyesores instead of public memorials, that became a ward of the local community or some governmental entity. In Indiana, when they're totally abandoned, the township trustee is responsible—they go on the tax rolls.

The modern private cemetery does not share that problem, because trust funds were created. We fund the liability in advance. That's one of the problems that I see with the idea of the national system where that is not done, where funds are not provided—

Miss KAPTUR. Now, just repeat for me: how do you assess the fee that is ultimately put in the trust fund?

Mr. WATKINS. If, for example, $100 is paid to us for burial rights, that goes on our books as $75 sale and $25—in our own cemetery we use 25 percent, State law calls for 15 percent—$25 passes right through into irrevocable trusts at the local bank.

Miss KAPTUR. Oh.

Mr. WATKINS. The principal of that trust is untouchable. Only the income can be used—must be used for the maintenance expense.

Miss KAPTUR. And what is the cost you assess that against, the full cost of burial, the cost of the plot?

Mr. WATKINS. No. The cost of the plot, itself.

Miss KAPTUR. Cost of the plot.

Mr. WATKINS. Now, different firms do it different ways. We assess it against the initial sale of the burial plot, because we're going to take care of it whether it ever has a burial put on it or not, so we assess that at the time of the original sale of a lot, or a crypt in the mausoleum, whatever. Well, I take care of, in my cemetery, many sections that have yielded no current income for 40 or 50 years, but the grass grows on them just as fast as it does on the ones that are being used currently today. So we have that liability funded.

One of the reasons that—one of the problems that I see in the national cemetery system, looking at it as a taxpayer, it's a forever obligation. Congress, in 1973, if you recall, the National Cemeteries Act, provided for a plot allowance in lieu of a grave in a national cemetery, which becomes a one-time, one-shot cost to the taxpayers, and then they're through paying for it. There's legislation, I understand, pending now that might modify that dollar figure, increase that dollar figure that's now a 14-year old figure.

But it does allow several things. It allows the veteran, if he happens to be at the wrong end of Arizona, as we heard this morning, or if he happens to be in Toledo and the national cemeteries in Cleveland, Camp Marriett, to receive the benefit. It's an equal benefit that works anywhere. He could be buried with his family, and wherever he wishes. The advantage of it, primarily, though: it's a one-time payment, and the Government's out of that.

Miss KAPTUR. I think it's about $150 now.

Mr. WATKINS. Yes, $150.

Miss KAPTUR. Could I ask you: are you aware of a number of private cemeteries around the Nation, or even public cemeteries

around the Nation, city-owned cemeteries, where sections are set aside for veterans? Have you had much experience with those?

Mr. WATKINS. Yes, it has been done in some places, and sometimes successfully, sometimes not so.

Miss KAPTUR. What makes the difference in success if they do work?

Mr. WATKINS. Well, when I say "successfully"—I mean the acceptance by the veteran population. One of the problems that arises is a veteran and his wife have accessability, or the right to be buried, in the veteran section. His brother, or their parents, or some other close family member, might want space close to them. A restricted section causes operational problems—religiously restricted sections, for example, once were quite popular. We had one in our cemetery. We won't have another one, because there are too many mixed marriages within that particular religion, and that's with the full concurrence of the church involved. It's an operational problem. We certainly have no objection to it, and we'll cooperate any way we can.

Miss KAPTUR. Mr. Brown, I wanted to ask you: do you have any personal experience with—you mentioned Minneapolis, Minnesota—with the national cemeteries which now provide grave liners? And how do the local managers regard that program?

Mr. BROWN. There are only three national cemeteries within the system which currently provide what is termed as "The Government Grave Liner". Mr. Hamerschlag related earlier that Calverton in Long Island, Riverside in California, and Borne, Massachusetts are, in fact, the only three national cemeteries within the national cemetery system that do, number one, require that grave liners and/or burial vaults be used, and are furnished when a family, for whatever reason, does not select the outer interment receptacle from the funeral director.

As far as Fort Snelling National Cemetery is concerned, there are approximately—3,000 interments annually making it the third largest national cemetery within the system, in terms of numbers of annual interments. Fort Snelling currently realizes about 50 percent of the interments which are without any form of outer interment receptacle.

As I mentioned earlier, the problem, of course, arises from many areas: maintenance, the sinking of the graves, the backfilling of the grave at the time of interment. Of course, over a period of months or years, these graves do require restoration. I believe that in 1975 the mandated grave liner program reflected the rather large maintenance costs that were being incurred by all of the national cemeteries. That program lasted, as I said, for 5 years and became, I suspect, rather cumbersome fiscally, and in 1980, it was discontinued.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you very much.

Mr. Harris, do you have any questions?

Mr. HARRIS. Would you describe a grave liner? I know what a vault—I've seen those, but I'm just not familiar with that term.

Mr. BROWN. Certainly. There are two types of outer interment receptacles which house the casket. There is a burial vault, which is a sealed waterproof outer burial container, and a grave liner is a two-piece outer interment receptacle: the base of the unit, which houses the casket, and a flat slab that is placed on top of the base

once the casket has been placed inside of the base of the unit. These are steel reinforced concrete units, and they do, in fact, prevent the sinking of the grave over a period of time. The weight of these units would average about 1,500 pounds.

Mr. HARRIS. I saw in there a reference to $50 to $82 average cost. They'd cost more than that, wouldn't they? Did I misread that?

Mr. BROWN. In terms of the cost of the unit?

Mr. HARRIS. Between $50 and $80.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. Beller, one of the directors of cemetery services, reported recently that with the three cemeteries—Calverton, Long Island, and Borne, Massachusetts—involved in the grave liner program, the average cost per unit on the contract has been in the neighborhood of $85. But, again, the position of our association is in view of the fact that the VA does not regard the grave liner as a veterans' benefit per se, simply to leave the selection and the providing of grave liners and burial vaults to the private sector.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you, Mr. Davis.

No questions? Mrs. Patterson?

Mrs. PATTERSON. No.

Mr. DAVIS. No.

Miss KAPTUR. No questions.

Gentlemen, I want to say to you as a panel that you've taken time out of your private lives and your private businesses to come here and testify before the Government of the United States, and we know that costs you money and your personal time. It's greatly appreciated as this committee develops this legislation in this important area.

Mr. Watkins, you wanted to make a statement?

Mr. WATKINS. Just one, parenthetically, and not what we're here to say, but as an operating cemeterian I cannot conceive of a modern cemetery that does not require an outer burial container. I think to be without it is an inconceivable situation. I know of no cemetery, other than I'm told now some of the national cemeteries that have that rule. It's just a total inconceivable concept to me.

Miss KAPTUR. We appreciate that. Not being in the business ourselves, we greatly appreciate your wisdom and experience in these matters, and I'm certainly hoping that the next panel which will come, composed of all of the veterans' organizations—and I will ask them to come up together so as not to take up too much of their additional time—will respond to some of your suggestions regarding not only proper burial techniques, but also national cemeteries and permanent costs to the people of the United States versus some of the other alternatives that you've talked about. Some of which are very controversial topics among the service organizations. I think we would welcome their testimony, as well, as we attempt to struggle with these issues.

Again, thank you so very, very much.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you. Might I just say one thing? Mr. Hardy and myself had the rare privilege and honor of placing a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown this past week, and everything that Mr. Costanzo and the General and the Colonel had to say relative to Arlington—and I think Arlington certainly reflects the honor and

the dignity and the glory of all national cemeteries—it was a privilege. We thank you for the opportunity of being here.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you.

Mr. Hardy?

Mr. HARDY. I would just like to say that when you wrestle with this outer container, I would pledge our office to assist you in any way we could—that's the NCBVA office—to assist you with any questions or anything that you may have in this regard.

Miss KAPTUR. All right, Mr. Hardy, that may well be necessary.

Congressman Harris?

Mr. HARRIS. Other than the three cemeteries that you mentioned, is it my understanding, then, burials in the other would be without any kind of liner or vault?

Mr. BROWN. Approximately 50 percent, and I think that this, ironically, holds true nationwide—it certainly holds true at Fort Snelling national cemetery in Minneapolis—in the neighborhood of 50 percent of the interments are made with burial vaults and/or grave boxes. Because there is no requirement, as there is in probably 90 percent of the cemeteries in the private sector, a requirement that some form of burial receptacle be used, when families of the deceased learn that it's not necessary or it's not required or mandated, about 50 percent choose not to provide any form of outer burial receptacle.

Very frankly, I mentioned the Public Law 99-576, with the disinterment and relocation of people from the flat to the upright sections. We are involved deeply in that situation and at the risk of espousing something that is rather distasteful, I think it's important to say that when a casket is disinterred from a gravesite where no burial vault or grave liner has been used, this flies in the face of the dignity and the proper disinterment or exhumation and relocation of those remains.

So, in answer to your question, about 50 percent are buried in burial vaults or grave liners.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you.

Miss KAPTUR. Thank you very much. We thank the entire panel.

I must apologize as I call the next panel, and say that I have to go to a very important meeting. I'm on a conference committee on banking, which I have missed all morning, and I must appear there. I'm going to ask Mr. Harris to assume the Chair for me.

I would like to call all of the veterans' service organizations together—we will provide extra chairs for you—in the following order: Mr. Paul Egan, Deputy Director of the American Legion, National Legislative Commission, accompanied by Mr. Rodney S. Kirk, the Assistant Director, the National Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission—we welcome you gentlemen back; Mr. Charles Jackson, Vice President for Government Affairs from the Non-Commissioned Officers Association; Mr. Jim Magill, Director of the National Legislative Service for the Veterans of Foreign Wars; Mr. Richard Schultz, Associate National Legislative Director for the DAV; and Mr. Bob Moran—happy birthday again, Bob—I feel like I'm on a radio show here—Associate Legislative Director of Paralyzed Veterans of America.

We really appreciate you gentlemen sitting through all of the previous testimony, and we will welcome your remarks, starting with Mr. Egan.

STATEMENT OF PAUL S. EGAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION; ACCOMPANIED BY RODNEY S. KIRK, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NATIONAL VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Mr. EGAN. Thank you very much.

There are a couple of points of clarification that I would like to make about our statement, and then turn the microphone over to Rod Kirk, who will summarize the balance of the presentation for the American Legion.

First of all, in our statement there is no reference to H.R. 1987 or H.R. 2653. Those two establish the area of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as the Tomb of the Unknowns, and establish a foreign currency fluctuation account. The reason we have omitted to say anything on those two bills is that we simply don't have a position to express, although I would certainly want to say that our absence of a position doesn't meant that we oppose either one of them.

Mr. KIRK. The American Legion is certainly appreciative to be here this morning and express our views on these very important subjects. The first matter we'd like to address is H.R. 1999.

The American Legion is supportive of this proposal, which will provide authority similar to that already in existence for DM&S in similar situations at individual VA medical centers. It is our understanding that presently the Department of Memorial Affairs can only expend funds in this regard with specific General Counsel approval. Enactment of this proposal would allow DMA to expeditiously alleviate hazardous ingress and egress situations as they are identified. A case in point would be the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, wherein it has been documented that several automobile accidents have resulted from an absence of any turning lanes into the cemetery, and this is forcing dangerous high-speed exits from a major four-lane highway onto the cemetery grounds.

The American Legion supports the legislative provision which would exempt the cemetery adjacent to the Wood, Wisconsin, Veterans' Administration Medical Center from complying with the upright marker policy. We note for the record that without the additional 12 acres received from the VAMC, the cemetery would most likely have to be closed some time this year.

The desire and reasoning for utilization of flat markers in lieu of uprights, in this case, is obvious when considering the location of this acreage, which can be easily viewed from the hospital and domiciliary. Historically, VA has always been cognizant of the psychological impact cemeteries adjoining medical center grounds have on the patient population, and have taken similar actions to eliminate these factors.

Public Law 99-576, which required VA to revert completely to utilizing upright grave markers, with noted exceptions, concerns the American Legion in two major areas.

Our first concern involves those 13 national cemeteries that have, since they were constructed, exclusively utilized flat markers. Requirements in P.L. 99-576 dictate that upright headstones now be utilized in these cemeteries as well, and we question the reasoning behind this requirement.

In addition, it appears that P.L. 99-576 does not make the exception for utilizing flat grave markers on the three-foot by three-foot plots utilized for interment of cremated remains under the Garden Niche Program. Through this concept, thousands of veterans and dependents who choose to be cremated can be interred in close proximity to their home and loved ones even if the national cemetery is in a "closed status." The American Legion feels that an exception to the requirements of P.L. 99-576 for upright grave markers must be made to accommodate the Garden Niche Program.

Available statistics show that in fiscal year 1986, 16 percent of all interments within the national cemetery system were of cremated remains. This is compared to just over three percent in 1973.

We would like to conclude by reiterating the fact that burial-related benefits are, in fact, the only benefits that apply to all veterans. Most veterans are not disabled; most never use a VA medical center; and just over half of all veterans have used the GI education bill of rights. The vast majority of veterans ask for nothing from the Government other than a flag to cover their coffin, and a decent burial in a national cemetery. The American Legion considers this to be a realistic and modest expectation from those who have served their country faithfully and honestly.

This concludes our statement.

[The prepared statement of the American Legion appears on p. 100.]

Mr. HARRIS. I think we'll go ahead and take the other members of the panel, and then we'll allow questions at that time.

Mr. Jackson?

STATEMENT OF CHARLES R. JACKSON, VICE PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Mr. JACKSON. Good morning, Mr. Chairman. The Non-Commissioned Officers Association of the USA is grateful to the subcommittee for allowing us the opportunity to offer our comments on the national cemetery system and associated legislation under consideration here today.

As NCOA has a special interest in H.R. 1987, a bill to provide for the official naming of the area within Arlington Cemetery wherein the unknowns of World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam Era are interred, we will begin our comments with that.

Mr. Chairman, one of the most significant oversights in our Nation's history has been the lack of an official name for the Arlington Cemetery site where the unknowns of America's four major military conflicts of the 20th century lie in symbolic honor to the Nation's war dead.

This oversight, although existing since the first unknown American service member was interred in 1921, has been raised to a level

of national urgency by the interment of the unknowns of World War II and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

The Secretary of the Army has deferred his authority to name this national memorial to the Congress. This legislation requires no appropriations of funds, has widespread support, corrects a national oversight, and provides for the proper honor and recognition of our Nation's fallen heroes. NCOA salutes the committee chairwoman for authoring legislation to enable the Congress to officially name this most important national shrine.

NCOA is very pleased to join with the Combined National Veterans' Association in offering our complete support for H.R. 1987.

Turning to the report of the national cemetery system, the report concludes that the system, under the current policy, is adequate to meet the needs of veterans, and suggests no improvements beyond those currently being implemented, and suggests no change in current policy.

NCOA commends the VA for the initiatives currently under way; however, we believe the report points out significant future problems the system will face. The report projects a net loss of 31 cemeteries over the next 33 years, a decline that will reduce the potential number of veterans served from 70 percent to 49 percent. These projections of service, however, are based on a veteran population measure using a 100-mile radius from the cemetery. NCOA believes the 50-mile radius used in a previous unpublished report of the cemetery system is more realistic. This report concluded that only 34 percent of the veterans population was reasonably served under the current system.

Both reports did agree on the identification of 10 veteran population centers where the opening of national cemeteries would expand service to an addition 26 percent of the veteran population. Expansion in these areas would place 60 percent of all veterans within a 50-mile radius of a national cemetery, and 90 percent within the 100-mile secondary service area.

In summary, NCOA believes the current regional cemetery concept, augmented by the construction of cemeteries in areas of demographic necessity, supplemented by State grant cemeteries, will meet the needs of veterans well into the next century.

Section 401 of H.R. 2005 is the one piece of legislation under consideration here today that NCOA opposes. The return to the use of upright markers in national cemeteries is one that has been extremely well received by NCOA members, and many, many survivors of deceased veterans. Although NCOA does not wish to be perceived as being insensitive to the hospitalized veterans, or the motives of the medical center director at Wood, we believe the exclusion of upright markers would deprive many veterans and their survivors of the honorable recognition they deserve and have earned.

The exclusion of upright markers at Wood would not erase the knowledge of the cemetery's existence from the minds of the veterans there. Cemeteries are places of memory and honor. They are as much for the living as the dead. To deprive veterans and their survivors of the honor manifest in an upright marker is unthinkable to NCOA.

In conclusion, NCOA endorses the provisions of H.R. 1999 and H.R. 2653, and again thanks the subcommittee for the opportunity to appear here this morning.

I will be pleased to entertain questions at this time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jackson appears on p. 104.]

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Magill?

STATEMENT OF JAMES N. MAGILL, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Mr. MAGILL. THank you, Mr. Chairman, for the privilege of appearing before this distinguished subcommittee to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Because we have heard a lot of background this morning on many of the proposals, I will just go ahead and state the position of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, as we were requested in our letter of invitation.

As we have heard, Public Law 99-576 does require the Veterans' Administration to provide upright grave markers at all national cemeteries for interment occurring after January 1 of this year.

VFW is on record as opposing the VA's position of mandating the exclusive use of flat markers in national cemeteries. We do commend the Congress for sharing our concerns on this issue by legislating the repeal of the VA's exclusive use of flat grave markers. All information available to us indicates the transition back to upright markers as called for in Public Law 99-576 is orderly, and being met with appreciation from the families of recently-deceased veterans.

In our letter of invitation we were also asked to comment on several legislative proposals relative to the burial of former members of the Armed Forces.

One such proposal would exempt the cemetery adjacent to the Wood, Wisconsin, VA Medical Center from complying with the upright marker policy as required by 99-576. It is our understanding the particular parcel of the land in question will serve as an addition to an existing national cemetery located several blocks away. As stated previously, the new section will be located adjacent to a VA medical center, and thus will be in open view of patients and visitors. As stated previously, we do oppose the exclusive use of flat grave markers; however, we believe an exemption from the current upright marker policy is justified in this particular case and, therefore, we will not voice any opposition.

H.R. 1987 was introduced by the distinguished chairwoman of this subcommittee, as well as several members of the full committee. This bill would designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery where the remains of four unknown service members are interred as "The Tomb of the Unknowns." The Veterans of Foreign Wars believes it is time for the Congress to name in law this most sacred monument to those who answered our nation's call and offered the ultimate sacrifice. VFW supports and encourages the timely enactment of H.R. 1987.

H.R. 1999 would amend Title 38 to authorize the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to

national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress. Similar legislation passed the House of Representatives during the 98th Congress, but unfortunately did not clear the entire Congress for enactment. It is our understanding this bill will have minimal cost and provide for the safety of those wishing to visit the cemetery. We, therefore, have no objection to this bill's enactment.

The final bill scheduled for consideration, H.R. 2653, would establish a foreign currency fluctuation account within the American Battle Monuments Commission. H.R. 2653, by establishing this account, would afford protection to the American Battle Monuments Commission so that it would be able to utilize the total budget amount intended by the Congress for the maintenance and operation of American cemeteries and monuments on foreign soil. The VFW supports the enactment of H.R. 2653.

This concludes my statement. I'll be happy to respond to questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Magill appears on p. 112.]

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Magill.

Mr. Schultz?

STATEMENT OF RICHARD F. SCHULTZ, ASSOCIATE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Mr. SCHULTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the more than 1.1 million members of the DAV I wish to thank you for the opportunity to appear here today before this distinguished subcommittee.

With respect to H.R. 2205, which proposes to exempt the national cemetery adjacent to the Wood, Wisconsin, VA Medical Center from provisions requiring upright grave markers, we have no objection to this provision; however, I would like to point out that the DAV believes that veterans and their families should have a choice, when possible, of the type of headstone or marker they desire.

H.R. 1999 would provide the administrator with authority to make contributions for safety reasons at national cemeteries. As you know, similar authority exists in Section 5008 of Title 38 relative to VA medical centers. We certainly have no objection to its passage.

H.R. 1987—this measure, introduced by the chairwoman of this subcommittee, proposes to designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery which safeguards the sacred remains of four unknown servicemen from World War I, Word War II, Korea and the Vietnam War, as "The Tomb of the Unknowns." The DAV has no official position mandated by our national convention delegates on this issue; however, I feel certain that if individually polled the majority of our members would pose no objection to the designation of this historic site in Arlington National Cemetery as the Tomb of the Unknowns.

H.R. 2653 proposes to establish a foreign currency fluctuation account within American Battle Monuments Commission. Again, the DAV has no official position on this measure. However, we certainly support adequate funding to properly maintain the cemeteries

and monuments under the jurisdiction of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

Concerning the issue of grave markers, the DAV has opposed previous VA policy to use only flat grave markers in national cemeteries as, in our view, we feel this practice is unfair to veterans and their survivors. We believe veterans and their loved ones should have a choice. Possibly, as new cemeteries are constructed, or existing ones expanded, consideration could be given to designating sections of these cemeteries for flat or upright grave markers.

In response to the administrator's report on the national cemetery system, we note that, in part, the report reveals that there are 100 operating national cemeteries, 45 of which are closed, an additional 21 scheduled for closure between now and the year 2000. Also there are 12 States with no national cemeteries, and 6 States where national cemeteries are closed to new interments. Simply stated, 36 percent of the 50 States have no national cemetery grave sites.

This report also discloses that at present 70 percent of our Nation's veteran population resides within 100 miles of national cemeteries. Should no new national cemeteries be constructed, or the existing ones allows to close as predicted by the year 2020, less than half of our Nation's veterans will have reasonable access to national cemeteries—this occurring at a time when an anticipated demand for national cemeteries is at its greatest.

The administrator has compiled a list, in order of priority, of the 10 geographic areas in the United States where the need for additional burial spaces is the greatest. While this report identifies the 10 geographic areas based upon demographic analysis, nevertheless the administrators report indicates that this does not change their regional cemetery policy, nor do they endorse the construction of any of these cemeteries.

We believe that the VA's persistence to continue the national cemetery system policy based totally on a regional concept is not realistic.

National Convention delegates from the DAV have adopted a resolution expressing our belief that the national cemetery system should have at least one national cemetery in each State. Such a policy, we believe, will provide a final resting place relatively close to veterans' homes and their families.

This completes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I'd be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schultz appears on p. 116.]

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Schultz.

Mr. Moran?

STATEMENT OF BOB MORAN, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Harris.

On behalf of Paralyzed Veterans of America I want to thank you and Mrs. Patterson and the other members of the subcommittee for holding this hearing. I will be brief. On behalf of PVA it is a pleasure to be here.

I will briefly comment on three bills. PVA supports Section 401 of H.R. 2005. We understand that this waiver from the current law would allow for the use of flat markers instead of upright, and we think that it would be to the psychological benefit of the veterans who are receiving care at the adjacent VA medical center, so we support that section.

PVA also supports H.R. 1999. It was a bill introduced by the committee chairman, G.V. Sonny Montgomery, and this would authorize the administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress. PVA supports this, which would thereby enhance the safety of employees, visitors, and families of deceased members.

Lastly, I would like to comment on H.R. 1987. I think everything pretty well has been said here today. PVA is wholeheartedly supporting this bill and working with the Combined National Veterans' Association of America. Our belief was learning upon that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, or Tomb of the Unknowns, or that area, number one, did not have an official name by law. We feel very strongly that it should have a name in law, and that's why we support the legislation.

I think it was brought out today in the hearing that everybody agrees that this is one of the most significant or hallowed sacred grounds in the world and, therefore, the importance attached to it. It should have a name in law. We feel "Tomb of the Unknowns" is the most appropriate, and I've used the example that the G.I. Bill is now named after our committee chairman, Sonny Montgomery, in law, and we agree to that and think it should be done, and I think that's somewhat the reasoning that something this sacred and to our Nation's veterans should be named in law. We support that.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today. I will answer questions and accept gifts at the end of this hearing.

[Laughter.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moran appears on p. 120.]

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Moran.

Each full statement will be made a part of the record, without objection, following the oral presentations.

Let me ask you—of course, this will apply to all the organizations. I'll let you answer, if you like, in the order in which you testified. Do you believe the "Tomb of the Unknowns" is well-accepted, and a suitable name for the tomb area at Arlington.

Mr. MORAN. Since I have the microphone, I think in November of 1921, the unknown soldier was just a name that was used, "soldier" making reference to Army where most of the ground troupes were Army. In 1985, when the Korean and World War II bodies were interred, I think the terminology or the term "Tomb of the Unknowns" has been used pretty well from that day. We think "Tomb of the Unknowns" is by far the most appropriate for that.

Mr. JACKSON. I wholeheartedly concur with what Mr. Moran said. Since the last three conflicts that we have been involved in—World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War—have all involved members of the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, and since the bodies interred in Arlington Cemetery are

truly unknown, then they could, perhaps, be a member of any of those four or five services, including the Coast Guard. With that thought in mind, I think that from a standpoint of the survivors, there are many families, widows, and children who have veterans who were killed in action and bodies not recovered. Many of them, I think, sometimes think that the individual interred in the tomb area in Arlington might be their loved one. I think that when we allow the term "Tomb of the Unknowns," that we can share with widows and survivors from all services the possibility that perhaps their loved one received that final honor.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I wish to say that, as you know, we haven't polled our membership; however, I'm sure that members of the DAV and members of the veterans' community at large certainly have no objections to naming the area of Arlington Cemetery as "Tomb of the Unknowns," and I believe that most everyone would feel that that would be appropriate. I agree with Mr. Moran that we certainly should name that area in the Arlington Cemetery area.

Thank you.

Mr. EGAN. The American Legion, like the DAV, we simply haven't polled our membership on it. I doubt, seriously, that there would be any objection. So in the absence of any position, we can't say that we support it, but we certainly don't have any objection to it.

Mr. MAGILL. I am not sure what else I can add as to what has already been stated now, and then at the beginning of the hearing, and throughout this hearing. The Veterans of Foreign Wars agrees that this area should be named in law, and we definitely agree that the "Tomb of the Unknowns" would be appropriate for the reasons that have been stated.

Mr. HARRIS. I think Mr. Moran had sent a card up here—postcard—we used to call them "penny postcards," you can't get them for a penny anymore—it's got "Tomb of the Unknowns." It was interesting to me. I was just pointing out to the lady next to me, I said it's printed in Ireland. I would have though that we could have found some folks closer to Washington to print these. I don't have anything against the Irish, I just believe in buying American.

Mr. MORAN. I was going to make a comment that I have some for sale, but after that—

[Laughter.]

Mr. HARRIS. All right. Let me ask you this: are you in favor of building a Korean War Memorial, and do you think it would merit placement in Area No. 1, which is the Mall area, or similar site in the heart of Washington, D.C.?

Mr. MAGILL. We have a resolution that does support the memorial. We have been working attempting to raise funds for this memorial. We would have to incur with the law that it be placed at the best site that the committee wants, either in Washington, or in an outlying area.

We do realize that there is problems that are, you know, with the Department of the Interior right now, and we hope that can be resolved as was commented on prior.

Mr. EGAN. The Legion has supported the creation of a memorial for Korean Veterans, but we're relatively indifferent to the posi-

tioning of it, or the location. It may be a little inappropriate to suggest that one area of Washington is a place of greater honor than another place, and we're just simply not prepared to say that.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, the DAV also supports the Korean War Memorial. In fact, as the law prescribes, one of our staff members of the DAV, our Assistant National Adjutant, is a member of that committee which will be looking into the area where this memorial will be placed, and also assisting in raising funds for the memorial. Certainly we support an appropriate site for this memorial.

Mr. JACKSON. NCOA has long supported the concept of some sort of memorial to the Korean Conflict. We have taken no position on a site selection, and would leave that to the Department of Interior, recognizing that space in Area No. 1, of course, is becoming crowded, but so is space everywhere. We would not like to take a position on where it would be located, but we would certainly support the concept of some sort of a monument to recognize the service of those who served in the Korean Conflict.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you, Mr. Jackson. Mr. Moran?

Mr. MORAN. We support it. We support the Korean War Memorial—leave it up to the committee for the most appropriate site. I believe one of our members from New York, who served in the Korean Conflict, is on the commission.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you. That's all the questions I have.

Miss Patterson?

Mrs. PATTERSON. Mr. Chairman, I appreciated your question about the naming the Tomb of the Unknowns, and I appreciate you all's response. For some reason, that doesn't say enough for me. "Unknowns" does not reflect military service, does not reflect veterans, and it just leaves something unsaid to me. I know "The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier"—I know the problem with that, but "Tomb of the Unknowns" could be anybody. I think we need to pay respect to those people who served and who lost their lives in service, too. I can't come up with it, whether it's "Unknown Veterans" or what, but just "Tomb of the Unknowns" just doesn't exactly pay tribute, in my mind and my heart, to the men and women who lost their lives.

Mr. MORAN. We've heard that comment or that sentiment expressed before. I somewhat agree, but I would add that the eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington—you have to be an honorably discharged veteran, retired, service-connected, or whatever, so the fact that the unknowns—it's a service person. It is a member of the military by the criteria to be buried in Arlington.

I think our view on this, in working with the other organizations, is that "Tomb of the Unknowns" at that time, after World War II, Korea, and Vietnam was later interred, that was the name that was just most commonly used, and it is as most closely used to the first original "Tomb or the Unknown Soldier." That's why.

Mrs. PATTERSON. I guess what I'm thinking, could "Tomb of the Unknown Veteran" or some—I know what you're saying about the cemetery, you know, being for military, but that's just a personal feeling I have.

Mr. HARRIS. Let me mention one other thing. I'm afraid Congressman Montgomery would chastise me if I didn't mention for

your consideration the problem of Corregidor and its deterioration. I know of several organizations already expressed interest in that, and I know that since I have you together all at one time, let me mention it again that we're certainly interested in that having been over there, and having seen first-hand the problems there. I know that's not on the agenda today, but I always have to think about my Chairman, and I know he would not be happy if I didn't mention that.

Let me thank all of the witnesses for coming and sharing with us your feelings. It certainly will be helpful as we go through the mark-up on the bills that will be before the subcommittee.

Unless there's something else then we'll gavel this meeting closed, and we're right just about on time.

Thank you for coming.

[Whereupon, at 12:08 p.m. the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

CHAIRWOMAN

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

JULY 1, 1987

THE SUBCOMMITTEE WILL COME TO ORDER.

TODAY MARKS OUR FIRST HEARING ON THE MEMORIAL AFFAIRS ASPECT OF OUR SUBCOMMITTEE. THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION EXTENDS OVER THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM ADMINISTERED BY THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY WHICH IS ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY AND THE OVERSEAS CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS MAINTAINED BY THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION.

WE WILL FOCUS NOT ONLY ON THEIR OPERATION BUT ALSO ON CURRENT LEGISLATION PENDING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE. WE WILL HEAR FROM THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC LAW 99-576 CONCERNING INSTALLATION OF UPRIGHT MARKERS IN OUR NATIONAL CEMETERIES, ON THE CONTENT OF THE REPORT REQUIRED BY THAT LAW AND ON FUTURE EXPANSION PLANS.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO HEAR FROM THEM ON WORKLOAD AND ON POSSIBLE WAYS TO IMPROVE CEMETERY EFFICIENCY SUCH AS THE INSTALLATION OF GRAVELINERS.

STAFFING SHOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM SINCE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HAS TARGETED AN ADDITIONAL $2 MILLION FOR 32 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES AND SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS TO RESTORE DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS STAFFING TO THE 1985 LEVEL OF 1,219.

PUBLIC LAW 99-576 ALSO AUTHORIZED THE ADMINISTRATOR TO ESTABLISH CEMETERIES IN 10 AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. I WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE EARMARKED FUNDS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS IN THE CHICAGO, CLEVELAND AND SEATTLE AREAS.

THE LEGISLATION WE WILL BE CONSIDERING TODAY INCLUDES A PROPOSAL TO EXEMPT THE CEMETERY SECTION ADJACENT TO THE WOOD, WISCONSIN VA MEDICAL CENTER FROM COMPLIANCE WITH THE UPRIGHT MARKER POLICY; A PROPOSAL, H.R. 1999, TO AUTHORIZE THE ADMINISTRATOR TO MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS ON LAND ADJACENT TO NATIONAL CEMETERIES IN ORDER TO FACILITATE SAFE INGRESS OR EGRESS; A PROPOSAL, H.R. 1987, TO DESIGNATE THE AREA OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY WHERE THE REMAINS OF FOUR UNKNOWN SERVICE MEMBERS ARE INTERRED AS THE "TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNS"; AND A PROPOSAL, H.R. 2653, WHICH WOULD ESTABLISH A FOREIGN CURRENCY FLUCTUATION ACCOUNT WITHIN THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION.

BEFORE CALLING OUR FIRST WITNESS, I WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE THE RANKING MINORITY MEMBER OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE, MR. BURTON, FOR ANY REMARKS HE MAY CARE TO MAKE.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN McCAIN
BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
JULY 1, 1987

Madam Chairwoman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for conducting this hearing on H.R. 1987. I have introduced similar legislation in the Senate, and I strongly believe it is vitally important to officially designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery where the remains of four unknown service members are interred as the "Tomb of the Unknowns."

As you know, the Tomb area and its guard have been the personification of dignity and reverence for generations of Americans. The monument symbolizes the extent of American sacrifice and service during our struggles to preserve freedom. But the Tomb area, in which the bodies of the unknown servicemen of World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War have been laid to rest, has never been officially named. The title "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" came into existence through popular usage and acceptance. However, we now have the opportunity to name in law this most sacred monument to our Nation's noble fallen warriors.

The authority to name any and all features within Arlington National Cemetery, including the Tomb, rests with the Secretary of the Army. But, since 1959, it has been the Department of the Army's position that Congress should determine the official title for the Tomb area. So, Madam Chairwoman, it is now up to us to convince our colleagues to support this much needed legislation.

Throughout our history, America's young men have fought and died for the ideals that have helped this great nation persevere through more than two centuries of struggle. More than 1 million individuals have paid the ultimate price, but their deaths have not been in vain. Their efforts and sacrifice have kept burning the flame of freedom and held open the door of opportunity for all of us.

The willingness of some to give their lives so that others might live unencumbered by the burdens of despotism always seems to evoke in us a sense of amazement and respect. But the conviction to duty-honor-country these brave warriors exhibited is indicative of their love for our country. I have no illusions about what little I can add to the silent testimony of these courageous Americans. Yet, I know that we must continue to honor them, and I do not know of a more fitting tribute to them than to officially designate the sacred and hallowed ground at Arlington National Cemetery as the Tomb of the Unknowns.

In closing, I again wish to thank you for your efforts on behalf of this legislation, and I would like to end my testimony by reading a passage of a news story of the interment of the First Unknown on November 11, 1921. This Pulitzer Prize-winning account captures the emotion and sense of honor and glory with which we thank those who pay the ultimate price in war.

"The casket, with its weight of honors, was lowered into the cript. A rocking blast of gunfire rang from the woods. The glittering circle of bayonets stiffened to a salute to the dead. Again the guns shouted their message of honor and farewell. Again, they boomed out; A loyal comrade was being laid to his last, long rest.

High and clear and true in the echoes of the guns, a bugle lifted the old, old notes of taps, a lullaby for the living soldier, in death his requiem. Long ago some forgotten soldier poet caught its meaning clear and set it down that soldiers everywhere might know its message as they sing to rest:

"Fades the light;
and afar
goeth day, cometh night,
and a star
leadeth all, speedeth all,
to their rest."

The guns roared out again in our national salute. He was home, the unknown, to sleep forever among his own."

TESTIMONY OF

Honorable Morris K. Udall

Honorable Bob Stump

Honorable Jim Kolbe

Honorable Jon Kyl

Honorable John J. Rhodes III

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

JULY 1,1987

The designation of a national cemetery in Maricopa, County, Arizona has been a high priority of Arizona veterans for nearly 50 years. H.R. 1884, cosponsored by the entire Arizona House delegation continues their effort to achieve that goal by directing the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery in Arizona.

We strongly believe expansion of the national cemetery system should be based upon the needs of veterans and their families, not designed for the convenience of the bureaucracy's administrative needs. The current system's expressed purpose of attaining regional balance is well intentioned. However, the practical result of this policy is not serving veterans well. Exceptions to the regional system have been made, and should be made in areas where veterans are not being reasonably well served. We should not force our veterans into a choice between burial in a national cemetery, hundreds of miles from family and friends, and burial close to home.

Arizona veterans believe that burial in a state veterans cemetery does not adequately recognize their dedication and service to the United States of America. The veterans of Arizona appreciate the federal assistance provided to the existing state veterans cemetery, but deserve the honor of

burial in a national cemetery within their home state.

In the 99th Congress, Public Law 99-576, designated 10 localities, including, "Phoenix/Tucson, Arizona", as being within the authority of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs, under Chapter 24 of Title 38, United States Code, to develop and acquire cemeteries as part of the National Cemetery System. This did not expand the Administrator's authority, but we believe it indicates Congressional recognition of the current system's failure to meet the needs of a large number of veterans and their families.

Arizona's veteran organizations have raised and donated nearly $100,000 to the state veterans cemetery. More than 6,000 people have been buried in the cemetery, strictly adhering to national cemetery criteria.

The Arizona State Legislature recently demonstrated its continued support for the proposal by passing a resolution urging the President and Congress to acknowledge the broad consensus in the state, desiring a national veterans cemetery.

Madame Chairwoman, we appreciate the opportunity to present our views regarding the national cemetery system, and H.R. 1884 in particular, and commend you for the interest you have shown in this area of great importance to Arizona veterans.

House Engrossed

ISSUED BY
ROSE MOFFORD
SECRETARY OF STATE

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Thirty-eighth Legislature
First Regular Session
1987

HOUSE CONCURRENT MEMORIAL 2001

A CONCURRENT MEMORIAL

URGING THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES TO APPROVE FUNDING SUFFICIENT TO ACQUIRE THE ARIZONA VETERANS CEMETERY AS A NATIONAL CEMETERY.

To the President and Congress of the United States of America:

Your memorialist respectfully represents:

Whereas, the State of Arizona has sought for many years to have a national veterans cemetery established in this state; and

Whereas, federal legislation has been enacted to acquire the large state veterans cemetery for designation as a national cemetery but without appropriating money to do so; and

Whereas, legislation has been introduced in Congress to fund the acquisition of the state veterans cemetery by the United States.

Wherefore your memorialist, the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona, the Senate concurring, prays:

1. That the Congress of the United States acknowledge the broad consensus in this state desiring a national veterans cemetery and enact legislation funding the acquisition of the state veterans cemetery for use as a national cemetery.

2. That the Secretary of State of the State of Arizona transmit copies of this Memorial to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and to each member of the Arizona Congressional Delegation.

Passed the House - February 19, 1987 by the following vote:
60 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 Not Voting

Passed the Senate - May 16, 1987 by the following vote:
23 Ayes, 0 Nays, 7 Not Voting

Filed in the Office of the Secretary of State - May 18, 1987

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN CLAUDE HARRIS

OPENING REMARKS

JULY 1, 1987

BEFORE THE SUBCOMITTEE ON HOUSING

AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

MADAM CHAIRMAN, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TODAY. I COMMEND YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS TO EXAMINE THE STATE OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM. YOUR LEADERSHIP IN THIS CRITICAL AREA OF IMPORTANCE TO THE VETERAN IS RECOGNIZED BY ALL MEMBERS OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE.

TODAY, THIS SUBCOMMITTEE WILL EXAMINE THE REPORT FROM THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION REGARDING THE STATE OF THE NATIONAL CEMETARY SYSTEM, AS WELL AS ADDRESS SEVERAL BILLS THAT REFER TO THIS SYSTEM.

I BELIEVE THAT IT IS FITTING THAT WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF THOSE VETERANS THAT HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES IN THE NAME OF LIBERTY. I RECOGNIZE THE SACRIFICES THAT THESE MEN HAVE MADE. WE, AS A COMMITTEE, MUST CONTINUE TO EXERT PRESSURE TO GUARENTEE THAT EACH VETERAN CAN EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO BE BURIED IN A NATIONAL CEMETERY.

I WOULD LIKE TO BRING TO THE COMMITTEE'S ATTENTION SOME STARTLING FACTS REGARDING THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM. PRESENTLY THERE ARE OVER 110 NATIONAL CEMETERIES. OF THOSE, 45 ARE ALREADY CLOSED, WITH 21 SET TO CLOSE BETWEEN NOW AND THE YEAR 2000. TWELVE STATES REMAIN WITHOUT CEMETERIES. ALTHOUGH I RECOGNIZE THE WELL-INTENDED EFFORT MADE LAST SESSION WITH THE PASSAGE OF PUBLIC LAW 99-576, I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE DISTANCE THAT ~~SOME VETERANS~~ families of veterans MUST TRAVEL IN ORDER TO [redacted] Bury their loved ones IN A NATIONAL CEMETERY. I LOOK FORWARD TO TESTIMONY TODAY BY VARIOUS GROUPS REGARDING THIS ISSUE.

IN MY STATE, WE WERE LUCKY TO RECENTLY OPEN A CEMETERY AT FORT MITCHELL. I WAS PRESENT AT THE OPENING CEREMONY. I APPRECIATE ALL THE EFFORTS MADE BY THESE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS TO ACCOMMODATE AS MANY VETERANS AS POSSIBLE.

I AM CONVINCED THAT AFTER WE HEAR TESTIMONY TODAY WE WILL BE ABLE TO WORK WITH YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS TO BRING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGES FOR THIS SYSTEM.

AGAIN, THANK YOU MADAM CHAIRMAN FOR ADDRESSING THIS CRUCIAL ISSUE.

Claude Harris

TESTIMONY

OF THE

HONORABLE CLYDE C. HOLLOWAY, 8th, LA.

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

OF THE

HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, July 1, 1987

MADAME CHAIRWOMAN: I appreciate your allowing me to testify before your distinguished Subcommittee today. Thank you for this opportunity. It is indeed a pleasure to be asked to submit testimony to the Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs particularly on this day, the first of July since July has been designated as the 125th anniversary of the National Cemetery System.

On June 25, I took the liberty of introducing legislation (H.R. 2789) which would require the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to establish a national cemetery in the central geographic location of Louisiana. I took this action because grave space for our veterans in Louisiana is severely limited and it will soon be filled.

Congressman Holloway's Testimony
--PAGE 2--
July 1, 1987

Currently, there are two cemeteries in Louisiana that still have open spaces: one is in my district in Pineville, the other is in Zachary. Projections by the Veterans Administration are that both cemeteries will close out in 1991 or 1992. However, with the current increase in deaths of veterans, particularly in our World War II veterans, I believe that these projections are far too conservative. In fact, it is possible that the Port Hudson National Cemetery in Zachary will close out next year since burials there are averaging about 200 a year and there are only approximately 400 grave spaces left. The Alexandria National Cemetery in Pineville inters about 175 veterans a year and they have 648 grave spaces left. Should Port Hudson close out, internments at the Alexandria National Cemetery will increase. This is not adequate to satisy the memorial needs of a veteran population of 438,000.

In 1973, the Congress enacted legislation which developed the Regional Cemetery concept of the National Cemetery System. However, regional cemeteries have proven to be far too restrictive and not realistically attuned to the long range needs of the veteran populations. In Louisiana, for example, after our two remaining cemeteries close, we will be expected to bury our veteran dead at the Houston National Cemetery. From the closest border of Louisiana, Houston is 128 miles. From Shreveport, it is 234 miles. From New Orleans, it is 333 miles. To bury our veteran dead in Houston is not practical! Also, statistics show that veterans and their dependents prefer to be buried within a 50 mile radius of their homes.

Madame Chairwoman, I am also aware of the provisions of Public Law 95-476. However, the State of Louisiana is hardly in an economic position to participate in the state cemetery grants program. I know this distinguished Subcommittee put a great deal of time and effort into the study of expanding the National Cemetery System during the last Congress and I know of the provisions of Public Law 99-576. Nevertheless, in my opinion, now is not too soon to examine and study the impending crisis facing Louisiana.

Some weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit one of the abandoned military bases in Louisiana, Camp Claiborne, which is very close to the Alexandria National Cemetery. Camp Claiborne was one of the largest military bases in World War II. I had with me on my visit Mark Maynard, Superintendent of the Alexandria National Cemetery. I am sure we both consider him an expert on what kind of land area the V.A. looks for in a new cemetery. Mark and I were both impressed about this serene area with thousands of beautiful pine trees set on a terrain of many acres of gently rolling hills. How fitting for a new burial ground for our veteran dead.

Some of my constituents have also pointed out another abandoned military base, Camp Livingston that may provide suitable grave space. Camp Livingston is also in the central geographic area of Louisiana. Although I personally have not had the opportunity to view this camp, I certainly have no problems with this site also being considered for a national cemetery.

Madame Chairwoman, the burial issue is a sensitive one. But, as a nation grateful for the sacrifices of our brave veterans, I believe it is only fitting that we provide them with the comfort of knowing that their burial needs have been addressed and a final resting place exists for them at the appropriate time.

Again, let me thank you and the other members of this distinguished Subcommittee for this opportunity to testify before you today. It is my sincere hope that you will find it appropriate to give every consideration to my legislation during this Congress.

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STATEMENT BY

MAJOR GENERAL DONALD C. HILBERT

COMMANDER, U.S. ARMY

MILITARY DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING

AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIRST SESSION, 100TH CONGRESS

1 JULY 1987

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

77-308 O - 87 - 3

Madam Chairwoman, distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, I am Major General Donald C. Hilbert, Commander, U.S. Army Military District of Washington, and am appearing on behalf of the Secretary of the Army who is responsible for the operation of Arlington National Cemetery. I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to give you a general status report on the operation of Arlington National Cemetery, and to express the views of the Department of Defense, with respect to H.R. 1987, a Bill to designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery where the remains of four unknown service members are interred as the "Tomb of the Unknowns." I have with me this morning Mr. Ray Costanzo, Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery, who is also available for any questions you may wish to pursue.

In considering this very important matter, one must first review and reflect on the entire rich historical background of this monument to heroes.

On the Virginia side of the Potomac River across from Washington, D.C. lies Arlington National Cemetery, the burial place of many great Americans and a revered shrine to America's war dead.

The cemetery was originally part of a 6,000 acre tract granted in 1669 by the Governor of Virginia to a ship's captain, Robert Howsing, in payment for transporting settlers to the New World. Howsing soon sold his acres, reportedly for six hogsheads of tobacco, to one John Alexander, whose family held the land until 1778. At that time, John Parke Custis, son of Martha Washington by her first marriage, bought 1,100 acres--the land which now comprises Arlington Cemetery and the Fort Myer Military Reservation. From that day on, the land would be associated with names famous in American history.

John Parke Custis died of illness during the siege of Yorktown in 1781, while serving as an Aide to George Washington. The future first President then adopted two of Custis' four children, Eleanor and George Washington Parke Custis, and took them to live at Mount Vernon. The boy became devoted to his stepfather and when the Custis estate passed into his hands he made it part of his effort to perpetuate Washington's memory. After first naming the property "Mount Washington," he built a mansion suited to house his

mementos of "The Father of Our Country." The mansion was renamed "Arlington House" after the Custis family's original property on Virginia's Eastern Shore acquired by grant from the Earl of Arlington.

George Washington Parke Custis and his wife had four children. Only one lived to maturity: Mary Ann Randolph Custis, born in 1808. In 1831, she married Lieutenant Robert E. Lee, a childhood friend and recent West Point graduate. The Lees, being a military family, traveled much but the house and land at Arlington always remained their home. Title was to pass to her eldest son, George Washington Custis Lee, upon her death. Then, however, the Civil War intervened and the future of Arlington, like so much else, was changed.

Robert Edward Lee returned to Arlington for the last time on April 18, 1861, four days after the firing on Fort Sumter. He had refused to take command of the federal armies being marshalled to crush the revolt. On April 20 he resigned his commission from the United States Army, stating that "Save in the defense of my native State, I never again desire to draw my sword." Soon after, the Lees left Arlington forever, having dispatched as much as possible of the family pictures, silver, and furniture to a safe place.

The former home of the Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia soon became a Union Army headquarters and fortifications were erected on its high ground. Forts Whipple and McPherson were the first military installations set up on the Arlington land. They were succeeded by the present day Fort Myer.

The U.S. Government took possession of Arlington under an 1862 "Act for the Collection of Direct Taxes in the Insurrectionary Districts within the United States." Mrs. Lee, who was living within the Confederate lines, attempted to pay the taxes of $92.07 plus penalties through an agent. The payment was refused on the grounds that Mrs. Lee had to make it in person. On January 11, 1864, the tax commissioners bid in the estate to the Federal Government at an evaluation of $26,800 "for Government use, for war, military, charitable, and educational purposes."

On July 17, 1862, President Lincoln approved an omnibus bill Section 18 of which provided that "The President of the United States shall have power, whenever in his opinion it shall be expedient, to purchase cemetery grounds and cause them to be securely enclosed to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country." Burial grounds were established that year in Alexandria, Virginia, and on the ground of the Soldiers' Home in Washington itself. Thus Arlington was not the first national cemetery, though it would become the best known.

Burial space at Alexandria and the Soldiers' Home quickly became scarce. On June 15, 1864, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton formally designated Arlington House and 200 surrounding acres as a military cemetery. The Army Quartermaster General, Brigadier General Montgomery C. Meigs, was charged with creating and administering the new facility. Arlington would remain under the Quartermaster General's jurisdiction until the abolition of that office in the 1960's.

The first military burial in Arlington took place on May 13, 1864--a month before Secretary Stanton's Order--when Private William Christman, Company G, 67th Pennsylvania Infantry, was interred. Those buried immediately thereafter were principally soldiers who died in Washington and Alexandria hospitals during the war. Subsequently the remains of Union soldiers were gathered from the battlefields of Bull Run, Bristol Station, Chantilly, and Aldie, Virginia; from abandoned cemeteries in the District of Columbia; from other points within a 40-mile radius of Washington; and from the military post cemetery at Point Lookout, Maryland. There were some wartime interments of Confederate dead but most of the more than 500 Confederates now buried in Arlington were veterans who died in the Washington area after the conflict was over. Many former Southern soldiers are grouped around a Confederate monument erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1914. It is the work of Sir Moses Ezekiel, a well known sculptor who served within the Southern forces in his youth. He is buried at the foot of the monument.

The grave of Pierre Charles L'Enfant, engineer, artist, and soldier, lies in front of Arlington House and overlooks the Federal City he designed. It is marked by a table like monument provided for by Congress. South of

the Arlington House a massive granite sarcophagus stands over a vault containing the remains of 2,111 dead recovered from the battlefields at Bull Run and the route to the Rappahanock. The Confederate Monument, mentioned earlier, is on the west side of the Cemetery, in Jackson Circle.

The Maine Memorial is on Sigsbee Drive. By Act of Congress dated May 9, 1910, the mast of the USS Maine was raised from Havana Harbor and brought to Arlington to honor those who lost their lives in the disastrous explosion and sinking which touched off the Spanish-American War. There are 229 crewman buried in the surrounding section, 167 unknown and 62 known. The names of all those killed are inscribed on the Memorial. In the vault at the base of the Memorial rest, temporarily, the remains of Ignace Jan Paderewski, Polish patriot and musician. Paderewski died in New York City in 1941 while his country was under Nazi occupation. President Roosevelt stipulated that he could lie at Arlington "until Poland is free." The perpetuation of Communist rule in his native land has caused Paderewski's temporary rest at Arlington to be a long one.

Three other monuments honor Spanish-American War dead at other locations in the Cemetery; a Spanish War Monument dedicated to all soldiers and sailors who died in that war; a Spanish War Nurses Monument; and a monument to Teddy Roosevelt's famed Rough Riders. Other memorials of interest include: the Canadian Cross of Sacrifice, erected by the Canadian Government in honor of U.S. citizens who lost their lives serving in the Canadian Armed Forces during the World Wars or Korea; the Argonne Cross, erected by the Argonne Unit, American Women's Legion in memory of the World War I dead; and a Chaplains Memorial erected by World War I chaplains in memory of 23 comrades who died in that conflict. Recent monument dedications include a memorial to the eight American Servicemen who died attempting to free the American Hostages held in Iran in April, 1980; and a memorial to the seven crew members of the Space Shuttle Challenger who lost their lives in the tragic explosion of the shuttle in January, 1986. A flagpole near the Memorial Amphitheater is dedicated to the memory of Commander Maxwell Woodhull, USN, and his son Brevet Brigadier General Maxwell Van Zandt Woodhull, in accordance with General Woodhull's will. It supplements the Cemetery's principal flagpole near the Arlington House.

77-308 O - 87 - 4

Preeminent among Arlington's many memorials are the Memorial Amphitheater, and on its plaza, the Tomb Area. Largely through the influence of the Grand Army of the Republic, Congress authorized construction of the Amphitheater in 1908. Funds were appropriated in 1913 and President Woodrow Wilson laid the cornerstone in 1915. Construction was completed on June 30, 1919, and a final dedication took place on May 15, 1920. The Amphitheater, an imposing white marble structure of classic design, occupies 1-1/2 acres and is enclosed by a marble colonnade with entrances at the east and west ends of its principal axes. The west entrance gives the public access to seating within the Amphitheater for ceremonies and other events. At the east entrance there is an outdoor stage. Behind the stage, within the Amphitheater itself, are display rooms at the main and second floor levels and a chapel in the basement. The latest major addition to the main level display room, which also serves as a reception area for visiting dignitaries, is a plaque dedicated by President Carter dedicated to all who served in the Vietnam Era.

The Tomb Area is of course one of the principal attractions for the more than 4 million visitors who come to Arlington each year. Placing of wreaths at the Tomb by foreign dignitaries and representatives of schools, civic, and fraternal organizations have become familiar occurrences. The first Unknown, a soldier from World War I, was laid to rest on the Plaza of the Amphitheater during ceremonies presided over by President Warren Harding on Armistice Day, November 11, 1921. A sarcophagus of pure white Colorado marble was erected over the grave in 1932. It bears the inscription:

HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD

To the left of the Tomb Area, a white marble slab marked 1950-1953 indicates the resting place of an Unknown American Serviceman of the Korean Conflict. To the right, a similar marble slab with the numerals 1941-1945 lies over the grave of an Unknown from World War II. The Unknowns of World War II and the Korean Conflict were interred on Memorial Day, 1958, during impressive ceremonies presided over by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon. A marble slab inscribed with the dates 1958-1975, centered between the crypts of the World War II and Korean Unknowns, marks the grave of the Unknown Serviceman from the Vietnam Era. President

Ronald Reagan presided over the funeral services for the Vietnam Unknown on Memorial Day, May 28, 1984.

More than 200,000 former service members and their spouses and children are buried in Arlington. The dead from all of America's wars are represented. Many who achieved personal distinction, whether in the military or civilian life, have found a final resting place there. Major military figures of the nineteenth century include: Montogmery C. Meigs, the Quartermaster General who first had jurisdiction over the cemetery; General "Fighting Phill" Sheridan; General George Crook; Major General Leonard Wood; and Admirals David D. Porter and William T. Sampson. Others whose reputations in American history are most attributable to their civilian careers are also interred at Arlington. Among these are Captain Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.; Colonel William Jennings Bryan; and Captain Robert Todd Lincoln, son of the martyred President.

Major figures of the 20th century include Admiral Robert E. Peary; Major Walter Reed; General of the Armies John J. Pershing; Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd; and a host of names familiar to all with knowledge of World War II. General of the Air Force Henry H. (Hap) Arnold; General of the Army George C, Marshall; General of the Army Omar N. Bradley; General Jacob L. Devers; Lieutenant General Claire Chennault; USAF: General Jonathan M. Wainwright; Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr.; and Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy. The most decorated soldier of World War II, Major Audie Murphy, is also buried at Arlington. Major John Foster Dulles; Lieutenant James V. Forrestal, USNR; and astronauts Lieutenant Commander Virgil I. Grissom, USAF; and Lieutenant Commander Roger B. Chaffee, USN, victims of an Apollo training fire in 1967, and Lieutenant Colonel Francis R. (Dick) Scobee, USAF, and Captain Michael J. Smith, USN, crew members of the Space Shuttle Challenger, are among those interred there as well. General Daniel (Chappie) James, Jr., the first black General Officer in the Air Force, three former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Nathan Twining, USAF, General George S. Brown, USAF, and General Maxwell D. Taylor, USA, and Admiral Hyman Rickover, father of the Nuclear Navy, have been more recently laid to rest. Supreme Court Justices William O. Douglas, a Private during World War I, and Potter Stewart, a Lieutenant in the Navy during the second World War,

have joined four other Supreme Court Justices buried at Arlington. Former Heavyweight Boxing Champion Joe Louis, an Army veteran of World War II, was buried at Arlington in April 1981.

In recent years, Arlington has become the final resting place for American citizens who have been made the victims of acts of terrorism throughout the world. Twenty-one members of the United States Marine Corps, killed in the bombing of the Marine Compound in Beirut, Lebanon, on October 23, 1983, are buried at Arlington. Seven victims of the terrorist bombing of the American Embassy in Beirut on April 18, 1983 are also buried in the cemetery. Navy Seebee Robert D. Stetham, murdered by hijackers of a TWA jetliner in June, 1985, and 24 soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division, killed in a aircraft accident in Gander, New Foundland, also rest in Arlington.

Arlington National Cemetery is also the burial place of two Presidents of the United States. As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, any President is eligible for burial in Arlington, whether or not he has had any previous military service.

William Howard Taft, 27th President of the United States and later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was buried on March 11, 1930. Mrs. Taft was interred beside him on May 25, 1943. Before her death, she arranged for her husband's grave to be marked with a monument designed by the sculptor James E. Fraser. The Commission of Fine Arts and the War Department approved the design.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th President and a Navy Lieutenant in World War II, was buried in a special lot in Section 45 of Arlington National Cemetery on November 25, 1963, three days after his assassination in Dallas, Texas. While President, Mr. Kennedy visited Arlington on several occasions. His last visit was on Veterans Day 1963, just 11 days before his assassination, when he placed a wreath at the Tomb Area. On an earlier visit, he stood before the Custis-Lee Mansion and commenting on the beauty and serenity of the scene before him, remarked, "I could stay here forever." His grave is some 300 feet down the terrace from the Mansion. It is in direct line

with the Memorial Bridge spanning the Potomac and the Lincoln Memorial on the Washington side of the bridge.

Mr. John C. Warnecki, a distinguished architect and a member of the Commission of Fine Arts, designed the President's permanent memorial and gravesite. Construction began in September 1965. The remains of the President and the two infant Kennedy children were interred in the permanent site on the evening of March 14, 1967. Boston's Cardinal Cushing blessed the gravesite the following day.

Construction and other expenses in the immediate area of the gravesite were paid for by the Kennedy family. The Government paid for the construction of roadways, approaches, and walks leading to the site. Since 1963, millions of Americans and others have visited the President's grave, which with the Tomb Area, is a principal attraction for those who visit Arlington.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy, brother of the slain President, was buried in Section 45 after graveside services were conducted for him on the evening of June 8, 1968. Senator Kennedy was assassinated on June 6 after victory in the California Democratic Presidential Primary. As a United States Senator with prior military service in the Navy during World War II, Mr. Kennedy was eligible for burial in Arlington in his own right.

For the millions who visit Arlington, as for all Americans, the cemetery is a national shrine. For this reason every effort is made to insure Arlington is maintained in a condition commensurate with its prestige and inspirational importance. Recent years have seen the development and integration of an expanded 612-acre Arlington, with improved landscaping of older areas, and preparation of new sections complete with trees, shrubs, turf, and watering facilities. Both the Memorial Amphitheater and the Tomb Area have been refurbished, and a new Administration building has been erected. Most recently, two phases of a Columbarium for the inurnment of cremated remains have been completed. This Columbarium is the only one of such magnitude and the only one in a national cemetery. It is open to all honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and dependent children. Eventually, there will be 50,000 niches for cremated remains.

Construction of a new Visitors Center and parking facility began in late 1986. These new facilities, much needed to better serve the visiting public and at the same time, reducing interference with funeral services, are scheduled for completion in the spring of 1988.

Since 1967, following a great increase in the demand for gravesites after the interment of President Kennedy, eligibility for ground burial in Arlington has been restricted to a relatively small portion of those who have served in the Armed Forces, their spouses and minor or dependent children. The purpose of these restrictions is to keep Arlington an active cemetery for as long as possible. At the present rate of burial, approximately 15 daily, Monday thru Friday, it is projected that the cemetery will not be filled until the year 2020.

At the close of fiscal year 1986, the remains of 202,068 persons were interred/inurned in Arlington National Cemetery. Of this total, 196,205 persons were interred and 5,863 remains inurned in the Columbarium in Arlington National Cemetery. In fiscal year 1986 services were conducted for 4,040 persons, which included 72 General and Flag Officers. In fiscal year 1987 and 1988, burials and inurnments are projected to be 4,180 and 4,320 respectively. Approximately 15 interments are accomplished daily.

The second 5,000 niche unit of the Columbarium was opened in April 1986, to accommodate inurnment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans not otherwise eligible for burial at Arlington. Design funds for the next 10,000 niche increment were requested in fiscal year 1988, construction funds will be requested in fiscal year 1989.

In addition to its principal function as a national cemetery, Arlington is the site of many nonfuneral ceremonies each year. In fiscal year 1986, 1,937 such ceremonies were conducted. A like number of ceremonies is anticipated for fiscal years 1987 and 1988. The President of the United States, ten Foreign Heads of State, Governors and other high ranking military and political officials participated in these ceremonies in fiscal year 1986. In fiscal year 1986, the President of the United States and the Prince and Princess of Wales attended Veterans Day ceremonies. In March of 1987, the

Vice President along with numerous dignitaries dedicated the Challenger Memorial to the seven crew members of the Space Shuttle Challenger who lost their lives in the explosion of the shuttle in January 1986. Arlington National Cemetery has approximately 4 million visitors annually, second in the National Capital Region only to the Smithsonian Institution as the most visited historic site.

And now Madam Chairwoman, I will comment on H.R. 1987.

The Tomb Area in which there are interred the bodies of the Unknown Servicemen of World War I, World War II, Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam Era has never been officially named. The title "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" came into existence through popular usage and acceptance. It has been referred to by that name in various enactments of Congress. None of which officially designated the Tomb Area. Since most of World War I was fought on land by soldiers, this undoubtedly is the reason for the use of the term "Soldier."

Legislation relating to the return and interment of the Unknowns of World War II, Korean Conflict and the Vietnam Era referred to "An American who lost his life while serving overseas in the Armed Forces of the United States." The remains interred in the Tomb Area could be those of a member of any of the services. Therefore, use of the term "Soldier" in connection with the American Unknowns of World War II, Korea and Vietnam might not be as appropriate as it was when used in connection with the Unknown of the World War I.

The authority to name any and all features within Arlington National Cemetery such as drives, walks or special structures including the Tomb Area, rests with the Secretary of the Army. However, since 1959 it has been our stated position that in as much as this is a matter of national interest, the Department of the Army believes that the Congress should determine the official title for the Tomb Area.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my remarks, and we will be pleased to respond to your questions at this time.

STATEMENT OF COL. WILLIAM E. RYAN

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
JULY 1, 1987

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The American Battle Monuments Commission welcomes the opportunity to appear before you at this oversight hearing to discuss the Commission's operations and the monuments, memorials and military cemeteries on foreign soil for which it is responsible.

The need for an organization such as this Commission became apparent after World War I, when many units of the American Expeditionary Forces erected monuments and markers to themselves where they served in Europe. These monuments and markers came in assorted shapes and sizes. Too often they bore little relationship to the achievements of the units, were poorly designed and constructed, and were without provision for site acquisition or future maintenance.

General of the Armies John J. Pershing, Commander in Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces of World War I directed his staff to study the matter carefully and provide him with its recommendations. That study resulted in Congress enacting legislation in 1923 creating the American Battle Monuments Commission as an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the federal government (36 U.S.C. 121-138b).

The Commission's primary functions are to commemorate the services of American Armed Forces where they have served since April 6, 1917, the date on which the United States entered World War I; design, construct, operate and maintain permanent American military burial grounds in foreign countries; control the design and construction of U.S. military monuments and markers in foreign countries by other U.S. citizens both public and private; and encourage adequate maintenance of such monuments and markers by their sponsors.

At the present time, the American Battle Monuments Commission administers, operates and maintains twenty-four permanent American military cemetery memorials and fourteen separate monuments in eleven foreign countries and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and four memorials here in the United States. Interred in these cemetery memorials are 125,000 United States War Dead -- 31,000 of World War I, 93,000 of World War II and 750 of the Mexican War. Additionally, 6,000 American veterans and others are buried in the Mexico City American Cemetery in Mexico and the Corozal American Cemetery in Panama. In addition to their burials, the World War I and II cemeteries, together with three memorials on United States soil, commemorate individually by name the 94,000 Missing in Action or lost or buried at sea of World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

The Commission is staffed by 387 full-time civilian employees and 6 military officers who serve it on a reimbursable basis. Fifty of the full time civilian employees are U.S. citizens; all but twelve of the fifty are superintendents or assistant superintendents. The remaining 337 civilian employees are foreign nationals indigenous to the countries where our installations are located. The Commission's office in Washington, DC supervises operations worldwide. Two field offices oversee operations in Europe and the Mediterranean, one in Paris and one in Rome. The superintendents of the cemeteries in Mexico City, Corozal and Manila report directly to our Washington, DC office. All superintendent personnel are veterans and have been especially selected for their administrative ability; knowledge of horticulture; knowledge of vehicle, equipment and structures maintenance; and that intangible but vitally important quality of being able to empathize with and employ compassion and tact when dealing with the relatives of the War Dead interred in or commemorated at the Commission's cemetery memorials.

The American Battle Monuments Commission is extremely proud of its shrines. Without question, they are among the most beautiful and meticulously maintained cemetery memorials in the world. Few others anywhere combine such fitness of design, beauty of landscaping and memorial features and immaculate care. As a consequence, the Commission receives hundreds of letters each year expressing appreciation of them and the empathy and dedication of its personnel. The following letters recently received attest strongly to this appreciation:

May 18, 1987

Dear General Goodpaster:

Enclosed is correspondence from my constituent, Mr. Sam Englehardt, praising the fine job being done at the Lorraine Military Cemetery. Knowing that it is important to tell people when they are doing a good job, I am passing this letter along to you to share Mr. Englehardt's appreciation for Mr. Dellinger and Mr. Gebhardt.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM L. DICKINSON
Member of Congress

Mr. Engelhardt's letter reads as follows:

May 10, 1987

Dear Bill:

You very seldom get a letter complimenting the government, but here goes.

My sister is buried in the Lorraine Military Cemetery near St. Avold, France. We have visited her grave many times. In fact, we were there on March 17 this year.

I've never seen a more immaculate or manicured piece of ground in my life. George Dellinger, the Superintendent, and Walter Gebhardt, the Guide, couldn't have been more accommodating. This is one agency I can't compliment too much, and I'll appreciate any good word you can pass on to their superiors.

Thanking you and with all good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Sam

The next letter is from Colonel George F. Stanley, USA (Ret):

May 19, 1987

Dear Colonel Ryan:

As a follow-up to your letter of December 8, 1986, to me on the above reference, I would like to thank you for your assistance in planning my trip to France and visiting my brother's grave. We returned to the U.S. on May 7, 1987, after two weeks in Paris and Epinal.

I was greeted at the cemetery by Mr. Kenneth J. Elkins and I must say that I was pleasantly surprised to see the concern that Mr. Elkins had for me in my search for my brother's grave. He went beyond the call of duty and assisted me in locating where my brother was killed in Germany. After 42 years of wondering, he helped put my mind at ease and also that of my sisters and brother who were anxiously waiting to receive pictures and a

report of the Epinal American Cemetery. He also assisted me in ordering flowers, speaking the language and most of all becoming a very good friend. Mr. Elkins is a dedicated professional that brought credit upon himself, the Epinal American Cemetery, and the U.S. Government. I sincerely hope that we continue to employ men such as Ken Elkins so that the heros that he cares for will continue to receive the care that money cannot buy.

Again, thank you Colonel Ryan for making my trip a most rewarding experience.

Sincerely,

GEORGE F. STANLEY

The last letter is from the 31st Fighter Group Memorial Association:

May 18, 1987

Dear Colonel Ryan:

On behalf of the officers and members of our association I want to thank you for the time and effort expended in your very informative and helpful reply to our inquiry regarding 31st Fighter Group casualties in WW II. The detailed information you furnished will be most helpful to our members who seem to be making more and more trips to England since their retirement. I will also report this information in detail in the next newsletter which will be going out to members fairly soon.

I happen to be a retired federal employee, having served five years in the USAF as a fighter pilot and staff worker, and then twenty years as an FBI agent, ten of the latter years being in Washington in counter-espionage work. I had business with dozens of federal agencies and interviewd thousands of federal employees in those years. And I can honestly say I never received such splendid help and service from any agency as I did in this instance from you. It's refreshing to see that some agencies do give such good service even if others do tax one's patience at times with their snarls of gobbledygook.

Sincerely yours,

EDWIN DALRYMPLE
Secretary

Regarding our current personnel authorization, from 1968 to 1983, the Office of Management and Budget as economy measures imposed frequent reductions in the number of personnel that the Commission is authorized to employ. Consequently, staffing has been reduced to a barebones level and severely limits the Commission's ability to meet its responsibilities for maintenance and care of its facilities. Only through the purchase of an extensive use of saving machinery and casual labor were we able to maintain even minimum standards. To make matters worse, aging structures and maturation of plantings continue to increase our labor requirements each and every year. Fortunately, this was generally recognized in 1983 when the almost annual reductions in our personnel authorization ceased. It does not appear that OMB has any plans to increase our current authorization from its barebones level of 387 to the 398 personnel authorized by Public Law 96-385.

From 1979 to 1984, the dollar exchange rates appreciated in the foreign countries in Europe where our installations are located. With the permission of the House and Senate appropriation Committees, the Commission utilized the surplus funds generated to replace worn out equipment, restore supply and spare parts stockage levels, and perform many maintenance projects on its list of deferred projects that the Commission had been unable to perform because of a lack of funds. The maintenance, repair and improvement projects accomplished with these funds did much to revitalize our facilities. They are as follows:

FY 1982

CEMETERY	PROJECT	AMOUNT
Aisne- Marne	Construct storage building	28,500
Aisne-Marne	Repair & resurface roads	53,600
Brittany	Repoint chapel	12,300
Tours	Repair terrace stones	21,480
(All)	Procure replacement headstones	90,000
Corozal	Construct superintendent's quarters	183,300
Corozal	Construct boundary fence	30,000
Henri-Chapelle	Resurface colonnades	26,000
Meuse-Argonne	Repair memorial terrace	57,100
Meuse-Argonne	Repair & resurface roads	71,300
Utah Beach	Procure Utah Beach Monument	86,500
Oise-Aisne	Rehabilitate superintendent's quarters	71,700
Oise-Aisne	Renovate memorial terrace	51,100
Montsec	Repair terrace	24,000
Somme	Repair roads	12,830
Suresnes	Rehabilitate superintendent's quarters	26,800
TOTAL		846,510

FY 1983

Manila	Replace hemicycle roof	125,000
Manila	Reseal roads	25,712
Manila	Construct maintenance building	36,448
Manila	Install underground power line	30,000
Aisne-Marne	Clean & treat chapel	40,630
Cambridge	Repair wall of missing	51,346
Lorraine	Clean & repoint memorial	78,964
Normandy	Restore power to memorial	22,853
Normandy	Construct new visitors toilet	92,455
Normandy	Resurface roads & paths	29,822
Oise-Aisne	Convert compost shed to storage	23,207
Oise-Aisne	Rehabilitate sprinklers plots A & C	81,140
Montsec	Resurface access road	26,038
Corozal	Construct parking lot	27,000
Corozal	Construct memorial	58,823
Corozal	Construct curbs	105,000
Corozal	Resurface roads	50,000
Corozal	Rebuild visitors toilet	65,000
Honolulu	Sand courts of the missing	42,317
Pershing	Procure base & install statue	58,935
TOTAL		1,070,690

FY 1984

Montsec	Clean & repair monument	109,180
Ardennes	Repair memorial ceiling	69,717
Normandy	Construct new parking lot	88,554
Normandy	Resurface entrance road	47,433
Normandy	Repair north perimeter road	27,225
Brest	Repair stonework	24,836
Henri-Chapelle	Repair wall of honor	28,910
Bellicourt	Clean & repair monument	37,767
Oise-Aisne	Repair roof superintendent's quarters	22,345
Corozal	Construct retaining wall	35,533
North Africa	Install underground irrigation system	59,340
Honolulu	Procure & install 80 panels	145,428
Honolulu	Repair upper terrace	52,992
Saipan	Landscape memorial	105,000
TOTAL		854,160
GRAND TOTAL		2,771,360

Late in 1985, the U.S. Government in concert with certain of its allies, took strong steps to reduce the value of the dollar on foreign markets in an attempt to make U.S. goods more competitive overseas. The resultant severe weakening of the U.S. dollar in Europe had a crippling effect upon Commission operations as approximately 90% of ABMC's appropriation is expended in foreign countries. For example the French Franc has gone from over ten Franc to a dollar to six or less at this time. This means that the salaries of our French employees and all purchases have risen 40% in their cost to us. In fiscal 1986, the Commission received a supplemental appropriation of $1,553,000 to help offset its losses due to the weakening U.S. dollar. With it, ABMC was able to perform most of its contractual maintenance, repairs and purchases. This year, fiscal 1987, will be even worse. The shortage of funds resulting from the lower rates of exchange is more than two million dollars. A supplemental of $1,414,000 to offset the losses in part has been approved by OMB, but the prospects of its passage in sufficient time to be of significant assistance to the Commission are not good. In the meantime, in an effort to cope insofar as possible with these severe losses, the following measures have been taken in Europe and the Mediterranean:

a. Casual labor has been curtailed;
b. Capital improvement projects have been postponed indefinitely;
c. Replacement of worn-out and inoperable equipment has been suspended;
d. Purchases of supplies and spare parts have been limited to those needed to perform minimum maintenance; and,
e. Repairs other than those of an emergency nature have been suspended.

If the dollar soon stabilizes somewhat above its current level, the Commission will not be forced to furlough any workers, which would be in violation of most of the treaty agreements with the host countries. At the present moment, however, we are short $150,000.00 to complete the fiscal year without furloughing any personnel. The level of care and maintenance of these shrines has deteriorated considerably and if prolonged much longer will start to become readily apparent.

The Department of Defense and the Department of State are not similarly affected because they have currency fluctuation offset accounts. This is an over simplification but essentially such accounts work as follows:

Transactions in foreign currencies utilize the budgeted rate of exchange as the standard for obligations. If the exchange rate when the purchase is made exceeds the budgeted rate, then the difference in dollars is deposited in the currency fluctuation offset account. If the converse is true, then the additional funds needed are withdrawn from that account. H.R. 2655 which is presently being considered by this Committee would establish such an account for the American Battle Monuments Commission. It would eliminate a long standing problem for the Commission and ensure that the Commission is provided the wherewithal to perform the care and maintenance of the shrines for which it is responsible that is expected by the Congress when the appropriation is enacted. In other words, it will allow us to do the things of which we had budgeted. Such an account is desperately needed at this time. Your support is strongly solicited.

On October 28, 1986, Public Law 99-272 was signed authorizing the American Battle Monuments Commission to erect a memorial in the Washington, DC environ honoring members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in Korea during the Korean War. The legislation requires the memorial to be funded with monies obtained through private contributions except for $1,000,000.00 which it authorizes to be appropriated for design, site preparation, associated administrative costs and partial construction. Estimated overall cost of the memorial is $6,000,000.00. Contributions received in excess of the $5,000,000.00 needed for construction of the memorial will be used to reimburse the federal government for the funds that it appropriates. Additionally, the legislation requires the President within 120 days of enactment, to appoint a twelve member advisory board of Korean War veterans to make recommendations concerning the siting of the memorial and its design, subject to the approval of this Commission, and to encourage contributions of private funds for construction and maintenance of the memorial. Membership of the board should be announced by the White House soon.

Public Law 99-652, which was enacted into law at about the same time, established standards for placement of commemorative works on federal land in the Washington, DC area. It separates available open space into two areas. Area I generally includes the mall between the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial and the land between the Jefferson Memorial and the White House. Area II includes scattered pieces of land within the city and some on the periphery of Washington, DC such as Hains Point, the land in the vicinity of the Iwo Jima Monument and Rosslyn. Military memorials commemorating a war or similar major military conflict are placed in Area II by Public Law 99-652. There is provision in the law, however, for changing siting from Area II to Area I, providing the Secretary of Interior or the Administrator of General Services, as appropriate, considers the subject of the commemorative work to be of preeminent and lasting significance to the Nation. After consulting with the National Capitol Memorial Commission, the Secretary or the Administrator, as appropriate, would petition the Congress to enact legislation placing the commemorative work in Area I. Such location would be disapproved if the Congress does not enact legislation to that effect within 150 days of being petitioned. Some time in the latter part of this year, a site should be made available, then work on a design will commence. On April 23, 1987, we appeared before the advisory commission to ask that it support erection of the memorial in Area I. The Commission subsequently voted unanimously to recommend to the Secretary of the Interior that the memorial be erected in Area I. Until voted into law and a site has been provided, action to obtain a design will have to be held in abeyance.

Of the estimated $6.000,000.00 cost of the Korean War Memorial, $500,000.00 is for design, site preparation and associated administrative costs; $500,000.00 is for a maintenance fund to be administered by the Department of Interior and the remaining $5,000,000.00 is for construction. Most if not all of these costs will be defrayed by private contributions. To date, 1,842 tax deductible donations amounting to $1,268,456.00 have been received for the erection of the memorial. Although it is anticipated that when the board is announced several hundred thousand dollars will be received from two or three major veterans organizations, many more contributions will be necessary if we are to reach our goal of $6,000,000.00.

All funds received are placed in a special Trust Account with the U.S. Treasury and will be utilized solely for the purpose intended. If for any reason this Commission does not erect the memorial, the contributions will be returned upon request. Contributions for the memorial should be sent to the:

American Battle Monuments Commission, 5127 Pulaski Building, 20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20314 and annotated Korean War Memorial Fund.

A Korean War Memorial in our Nation's capital, honoring members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in Korea during the war, especially those who were killed in action, are still Missing in Action, or were held as prisoners of war, is long overdue.

Any publicity you may wish to give in your newsletters to this worthwhile project will be greatly appreciated.

Madam Chairwoman, this completes my prepared presentation. I will be happy to answer any questions that you and the other members of the Subcommittee may care to ask.

TESTIMONY OF ARTHUR S. HAMERSCHLAG
DEPUTY CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
JULY 1, 1987

GOOD MORNING, MADAM CHAIRWOMAN. I AM PLEASED TO PROVIDE YOU WITH AN UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM AND OFFER COMMENTS ON THE LEGISLATIVE ITEMS MENTIONED IN YOUR LETTER OF INVITATION. THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM, WILFRED L. EBEL, HAS RECENTLY BEEN NAMED. HE WILL BE REPORTING OFFICIALLY ON JULY 12, AND HAS ASKED ME TO CONVEY HIS REGARDS.

OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

THE DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS IS CHARGED WITH A UNIQUELY SENSITIVE MISSION - TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARDS THAT THE PUBLIC RIGHTLY EXPECTS, AND TO SERVE THE FAMILIES OF THOSE WHO ARE BURIED IN A DIGNIFIED, COMPASSIONATE MANNER. THIS YEAR MARKS THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1862 UNDER PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM PRESENTLY CONSISTS OF 110 NATIONAL CEMETERIES LOCATED IN 38 STATES AND PUERTO RICO. SIXTY-FIVE ARE OPEN TO NEW INTERMENTS, AND THE REMAINING 45 ARE CLOSED. THREE NEW NATIONAL CEMETERIES ARE UNDER DEVELOPMENT - WEST VIRGINIA, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO OPEN LATER THIS YEAR; FLORIDA, WHICH WILL BE READY IN 1988; AND NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, WHICH IS STILL IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STAGE.

JUST A LITTLE OVER A MONTH AGO, ON MEMORIAL DAY, WE DEDICATED A NEW NATIONAL CEMETERY AT FT. MITCHELL, ALABAMA. THAT WAS A SPECIAL MILESTONE, AS IT COMPLETED THE REGIONAL CONCEPT, A PLAN OF LIMITED EXPANSION FOR THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM THAT WAS BEGUN IN THE MID 1970's. WE WERE HONORED TO HAVE REP. CLAUDE HARRIS, A MEMBER OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE, AS WELL AS OTHER DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONY.

WORKLOAD

WORKLOAD IN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM HAS BEEN GROWING STEADILY, AND IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE INCREASING UNTIL SEVERAL YEARS AFTER THE TURN OF THE NEXT CENTURY. INTERMENTS REACHED A RECORD HIGH OF 52,220 IN FISCAL YEAR 1986. THAT IS A 41% INCREASE IN 10 YEARS' TIME.

INTERMENTS REPRESENT THE MOST LABOR-INTENSIVE INDICATOR OF CEMETERY WORKLOAD, BUT ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOP IS GRAVESITES MAINTAINED. AT THE END OF FISCAL YEAR 1986 WE WERE MAINTAINING OVER 1.6 MILLION GRAVESITES IN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM. OBVIOUSLY, THIS FIGURE GOES UP EVERY YEAR AS NEW INTERMENTS ARE MADE.

ACTUAL AND PROJECTED FIGURES OF INTERMENTS AND GRAVESITES MAINTAINED ARE SHOWN BELOW.

NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

	YEAR	GRAVESITES MAINTAINED	INTERMENTS
ACTUAL	1977	1,306,403	37,013
	1978	1,335,927	36,744
	1979	1,367,745	39,248
	1980	1,416,934	41,120
	1981	1,450,803	41,811
	1982	1,478,541	41,422
	1983	1,512,765	44,684
	1984	1,552,010	47,021
	1985	1,598,688	50,489
	1986	1,640,721	52,220
PROJECTED	1987	1,683,800	53,700
	1988	1,728,600	55,000
	1989	1,775,300	56,400
	1990	1,824,000	57,900
	1991	1,875,700	60,800
	1992	1,929,200	62,600
	1993	1,984,900	64,600

A MAJOR REASON FOR THIS WORKLOAD GROWTH IS THE AGING OF THE U.S. VETERAN POPULATION, AND THE INCREASING NUMBER OF VETERAN DEATHS, ESPECIALLY IN THE VERY LARGE CATEGORY OF WORLD WAR II VETERANS. THIS TREND IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE UNTIL WELL INTO THE NEXT CENTURY. FOR EXAMPLE, IN 1986 THE MEDIAN AGE OF THE VETERAN POPULATION WAS 53.1 AND THE NUMBER OF VETERAN DEATHS WAS AN ESTIMATED 426,800. BY THE YEAR 2010 THE MEDIAN AGE WILL BE UP TO 61.7 YEARS, AND THE NUMBER OF VETERAN DEATHS ARE ESTIMATED AT 610,600.

DMA HAS UNDERTAKEN SOME MAJOR INITIATIVES OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS TO HELP RESPOND TO THIS INCREASING DEMAND FOR SERVICE. FOR EXAMPLE, SEVEN NEW NATIONAL CEMETERIES HAVE BEEN OPENED IN THE LAST TEN YEARS, INCLUDING OUR TWO BUSIEST, CALVERTON, NEW YORK, AND RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO REOPEN SOME THAT HAD BEEN OR WERE ABOUT TO CLOSE, EITHER BY ACCEPTING LAND DONATIONS OR BY RECLAIMING EXISTING LAND THAT WAS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED UNUSABLE.

ANOTHER INNOVATIVE APPROACH HAS BEEN THE GARDEN NICHE CONCEPT. USING THIS CONCEPT, SMALL 3' X 3' PLOTS ARE USED TO ACCOMMODATE CREMATED REMAINS ON LAND WHICH CANNOT OTHERWISE BE USED FOR FULL CASKET BURIALS. TYPICAL SITES WOULD BE ALONG WALKWAYS, NEXT TO PERIMETER WALLS, OR ON VERY STEEP SLOPES. GARDEN NICHES HAVE PERMITTED US TO PROVIDE SERVICE EVEN AT CEMETERIES WHICH HAD BEEN CLOSED FOR MANY YEARS. IN 1985, FOR EXAMPLE, FOUR CLOSED CEMETERIES IN CALIFORNIA WERE REOPENED FOR BURIAL OF CREMATED REMAINS. CREMATION HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY POPULAR IN THIS COUNTRY. THE GARDEN NICHE CONCEPT GIVES MANY ADDITIONAL VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS THE CHANCE TO BURY THEIR LOVED ONES CLOSE TO HOME, IN THE CEMETERY OF THEIR CHOICE, AND HAS BEEN VERY WELL ACCEPTED. BECAUSE OF THE SIZE AND LOCATION OF THE PLOTS, GARDEN NICHES ARE MEMORIALIZED WITH FLAT GRAVE MARKERS. UPRIGHT MARKERS WOULD BE CROWDED JUST A FEW INCHES APART ON THESE SMALL PLOTS, OR RIGHT UP AGAINST WALLS, AND MOWING EQUIPMENT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PASS THROUGH. WE HAVE SOME CONCERN THAT THE CURRENT LANGUAGE OF P.L. 99-576 WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT THE GARDEN NICHE PROGRAM, ONCE EXISTING SECTIONS ARE FILLED. THE SUBCOMMITTEE MAY WISH TO CONSIDER LEGISLATION THAT WOULD CLARIFY VA's AUTHORITY TO CONTINUE USING FLAT MARKERS ON GARDEN NICHES.

VA HAS FOR MANY YEARS CONTRACTED OPERATIONS AT SMALL, INACTIVE CEMETERIES UNDER AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 1004 OF TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE. THE SAVINGS ACHIEVED HAVE BEEN APPLIED INTERNALLY, AND HAVE HELPED US TO PURSUE THE TYPES OF INITIATIVES I HAVE JUST DESCRIBED TO INCREASE SERVICES WITHOUT REQUIRING LARGE AMOUNTS OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES. AT PRESENT, 23 NATIONAL CEMETERIES ARE OPERATED UNDER CONTRACT WITH GENERALLY SATISFACTORY RESULTS. SUPERVISION OF THE CONTRACTOR IS STILL PROVIDED BY VA EMPLOYEES FROM A NEIGHBORING CEMETERY.

OTHER INTERNAL MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES INCLUDE INCREASED AUTOMATION AT THE NATIONAL CEMETERIES AND AT THE NATIONAL CEMETERY AREA OFFICES; A COMPETITIVE

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TO ENHANCE THE POTENTIAL OF SELECTED CEMETERY DIRECTORS; AND A NEW CEMETERY INSPECTION PROGRAM IN WHICH CEMETERIES ARE VISITED ON A REGULAR BASIS TO DETERMINE IF OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR IMPROVING OPERATIONS. WE HOPE WITH THESE KINDS OF INNOVATIONS TO STRENGTHEN CEMETERY MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS.

GRAVELINERS

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN, YOUR LETTER SPECIFICALLY ASKED ABOUT GRAVELINERS AS A MEANS OF IMPROVING EFFICIENCY.

GRAVELINERS WERE FIRST INTRODUCED INTO THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM IN FISCAL YEAR 1975, ON AN EXPERIMENTAL BASIS, AT 10 LOCATIONS. THE RESULTS WERE POSITIVE, AND THEIR USE WAS GRADUALLY EXPANDED. BY FISCAL YEAR 1980, HOWEVER, THE AVERAGE COST HAD RISEN FROM $50 TO $82 PER UNIT. BECAUSE OF THE ESCALATING COST AND FISCAL RESTRAINTS, IT WAS AT THAT TIME DETERMINED THAT DMA WOULD PROVIDE THEM ONLY IN THREE OF OUR LARGE REGIONAL CEMETERIES, CALVERTON, RIVERSIDE, AND MASSACHUSETTS, WHERE IT IS MOST COST-EFFECTIVE TO DO SO. WE ALSO PERMIT NEXT-OF-KIN TO PROVIDE GRAVELINERS OR VAULTS AT PRIVATE EXPENSE AT ANY LOCATION. IN FISCAL YEAR 1986 10,783 GRAVELINERS WERE PROVIDED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE AT THE THREE LOCATIONS MENTIONED, AND AN ADDITIONAL 10,964 VAULTS OR GRAVELINERS WERE PROVIDED AT PRIVATE EXPENSE.

GRAVELINERS ARE GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS A GOOD WAY TO REDUCE MAINTENANCE COSTS OVER A PERIOD OF TIME. IT IS VERY COMMON, IF NOT PREDOMINANT, PRACTICE FOR PRIVATE AND DENOMINATIONAL CEMETERIES TO REQUIRE THEM. THEY ARE SEEN AS AN ADVANTAGE TO NATIONAL CEMETERIES FOR FOUR BASIC REASONS: 1) GRAVELINERS REDUCE MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS BY PREVENTING THE GROUND FROM SINKING OVER A COLLAPSING CASKET; 2) THEY HELP PREVENT HEADSTONES FROM SINKING AND TILTING; 3) THEY REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY THAT VISITORS AND EMPLOYEES WILL FALL WHEN WALKING OVER UNEVEN GROUND; AND 4) THEY HELP ASSURE THAT GROUNDS MEET THE HIGH STANDARDS OF APPEARANCE EXPECTED OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES, WHENEVER THE PUBLIC MAY CHOOSE TO VISIT.

USE OF GRAVELINERS IS MOST EFFICIENT AT ACTIVE CEMETERIES, WHERE GRAVESITES ARE BEING USED FOR THE FIRST TIME AND ALL BURIALS WITHIN A SECTION WOULD HAVE GRAVELINERS. THEY HAVE LESS OF AN IMPACT AT LOCATIONS WHERE MOST OF THE BURIALS ARE SECOND INTERMENTS. AT SOME OF THE NEW CEMETERIES NOW UNDER

DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES SUCH AS PRE-PLACED CRYPTS ARE BEING TESTED TO SEE IF THIS WOULD BE AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO REDUCING MAINTENANCE COSTS.

HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

BEFORE MOVING ON TO IMPLEMENTATION OF P.L. 99-576 AND PENDING LEGISLATIVE ISSUES, I WOULD LIKE TO TOUCH BRIEFLY ON THE TWO OTHER MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES OF DMA. THESE ARE PROVIDING GOVERNMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS FOR VETERANS' GRAVES IN PRIVATE AND NATIONAL CEMETERIES, AND THE STATE CEMETERY GRANTS PROGRAM.

LAST FISCAL YEAR A RECORD 246,668 HEADSTONES AND MARKERS WERE ORDERED. AN AUTOMATED SYSTEM HAS BEEN INSTALLED TO PROCESS APPLICATIONS AND ORDERS, WHICH WE BELIEVE WILL ENABLE US TO PROVIDE FASTER, BETTER AND MORE EFFICIENT SERVICE. THE CONVERSION FROM A MANUAL TO AN AUTOMATED SYSTEM TOOK PLACE OVER A NUMBER OF MONTHS, AND UNFORTUNATELY RESULTED IN SOME BACKLOGS. ALL OF THOSE CASES HAVE BEEN ENTERED INTO THE SYSTEM NOW AND OUR MONUMENT SERVICE EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN WORKING OVERTIME TO GET THINGS BACK ON TRACK. SERVICE WAS ALSO IMPEDED BY A TECHNICAL PROBLEM AT THE FOUNDRY OF ONE OF OUR MAJOR CONTRACTORS. THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN CORRECTED, AND THE CONTRACTOR HAS ALSO BEEN WORKING OVERTIME.

TWO CHANGES IN INTERNAL POLICY HAVE BEEN MADE IN RESPONSE TO MANY REQUESTS FROM VETERANS AND NEXT OF KIN. THE FIRST IS TO ALLOW "ARMY AIR CORPS" IN LIEU OF A BRANCH OF SERVICE LINE; MANY VETERANS FELT THAT THIS WAS MORE DESCRIPTIVE OF THE NATURE OF THEIR SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II, EVEN THOUGH TECHNICALLY THEY SERVED AT THE TIME IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

THE SECOND CHANGE IS TO REPLACE GOVERNMENT MARKERS AT VA EXPENSE WHEN THE INSCRIPTION CONTAINS AN ERROR OF FACT. IN THE PAST, WHEN SUCH ERRORS WERE THE RESULT OF ERRORS ON THE APPLICATION FORM SUPPLIED BY THE NEXT-OF-KIN, THE MARKERS WERE REPLACED ONLY AT PRIVATE EXPENSE. OVER THE YEARS, WE RECEIVED MANY MOVING LETTERS FROM PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN DISTRAUGHT BY GRIEF AT THE TIME THEY SUBMITTED THE APPLICATION, DID NOT NOTICE THEIR ERROR, AND SUBSEQUENTLY COULD NOT AFFORD A REPLACEMENT. DMA BELIEVES THAT THIS IS A COMPASSIONATE SERVICE THAT CAN BE PROVIDED AT RELATIVELY LITTLE COST, AND THAT ACTUALLY WILL FURTHER OUR MISSION TO ASSURE THAT VETERANS' GRAVES ARE PROPERLY MARKED.

ANOTHER BENEFIT IS THAT THE NEW POLICY WILL AVOID THE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE OF RESEARCHING EACH CASE, DETERMINING FAULT, AND EXCHANGING CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE NEXT OF KIN.

STATE CEMETERY GRANTS PROGRAM

THE VA's RELATIONSHIP TO STATE VETERANS' CEMETERIES IS BASED ON A FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO AID ANY STATE IN ESTABLISHING, EXPANDING OR IMPROVING VETERANS CEMETERIES OWNED BY THE STATE. THE PROGRAM BECAME OPERATIONAL ON OCTOBER 1, 1979, AND AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 1986, THE VA HAD RECEIVED APPLICATIONS FROM 17 STATES REQUESTING $16.2 MILLION. OVER $11.8 MILLION HAS BEEN OBLIGATED IN SUPPORT OF THE PROJECTS, AND 26 GRANT AWARDS TOTALING $10.4 MILLION HAVE BEEN MADE TO TEN STATES AND THE TERRITORY OF GUAM.

UPRIGHT GRAVE MARKERS

P.L. 99-576 REQUIRES THAT HENCEFORWARD, GRAVE MARKERS USED IN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM ARE TO BE UPRIGHT. THE LAW PROVIDED EXCEPTIONS FOR CEMETERIES WHICH WILL CLOSE WITHIN 5 YEARS, AND FOR BURIAL SECTIONS WHERE FLAT GRAVE MARKERS ARE ALREADY IN USE.

THIS PROVISION OF THE LAW RESPONDED TO A LARGE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS THAT WERE RECEIVED WHEN DMA BEGAN CONVERTING CEMETERIES WHICH HAD TRADITIONALLY USED UPRIGHT MARKERS TO A FLAT STYLE. WITH THIS IN MIND, WE HAVE MOVED TO GET THOSE CEMETERIES BACK TO THE UPRIGHT STYLE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. TWENTY-SEVEN CEMETERIES WERE IDENTIFIED AS FALLING INTO THIS CATEGORY. OF THESE, THREE WILL CLOSE BEFORE 1991. I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT 17 OF THE OTHER 24 ARE NOW BACK TO USING UPRIGHT HEADSTONES. BY THIS FALL THE OTHER CEMETERIES IN THIS CATEGORY WILL BE USING UPRIGHT HEADSTONES. THE REMAINING CEMETERIES COVERED BY THE LAW - THOSE WHICH HAVE ALWAYS HAD FLAT MARKERS OR HAVE USED THEM FOR MANY YEARS WITHOUT COMPLAINT - WILL PHASE OVER TO THE UPRIGHT STYLE AS EXISTING SECTIONS ARE FILLED.

REPORT ON THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

P.L. 99-576 ALSO REQUIRED THE VA TO SUBMIT A REPORT TO CONGRESS ON THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING A LIST OF THE 10 AREAS MOST IN NEED OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS BURIAL SPACE, COMMENTS ON THE FEASIBILITY OF ACQUIRING EXISTING STATE VETERANS CEMETERIES, AND PLANS FOR MEETING FUTURE VETERANS BURIAL NEEDS. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY IS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE INFORMATION

PROVIDED EARLIER ON WORKLOAD GROWTH IN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM, AND FUTURE DEMANDS ON THE SYSTEM ASSOCIATED WITH THE AGING OF THE VETERAN POPULATION.

THE STUDY FINDS THAT STATE VETERANS CEMETERIES, BUILT IN PART WITH MATCHING FUNDS FROM THE STATE CEMETERY GRANTS PROGRAM, COMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM IN DELIVERY OF VETERANS' BURIAL BENEFITS. THE NATIONAL SYSTEM, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE BASED ON AN ORDERLY PLANNING PROCESS TO ACHIEVE NATIONWIDE RATHER THAN LOCAL OBJECTIVES. STATE VETERANS CEMETERIES, WHILE OFTEN VERY EFFECTIVE IN ACHIEVING THEIR OWN OBJECTIVES, DO NOT NECESSARILY MEET THIS CRITERION. THE STUDY NOTES THAT ACQUISITION OF STATE VETERANS CEMETERIES AS PART OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM COULD SET UP ADVERSARIAL SITUATIONS AMONG THE STATES AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AND RECOMMENDS AGAINST IT.

FINALLY, THE STUDY PROPOSES THE FOLLOWING FIVE POINT PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPING LONG RANGE PLANS TO MEET FUTURE BURIAL NEEDS.

1. ENCOURAGE EXPANDED PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE CEMETERY GRANTS PROGRAM.
2. PHASED DEVELOPMENT OF PRESENTLY UNDEVELOPED LAND IN OPEN NATIONAL CEMETERIES.
3. EXPANSION OF THE GARDEN NICHE CONCEPT.
4. LIMITED EXPANSION OF EXISTING NATIONAL CEMETERIES.
5. REVIEW THE REGIONAL CEMETERY POLICY THAT HAS GOVERNED THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM.

MADAM CHAIRMWOMAN, THE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM HAS BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE CONGRESS, AND I TRUST IT WILL BE HELPFUL. I WOULD ADD, HOWEVER, THAT THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED IN RESPONSE TO A LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT, AND DOES NOT REPRESENT VA's POLICY TOWARD THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM. I WOULD BE PLEASED TO BRIEF YOU, OTHER MEMBERS, AND STAFF IN MORE DETAIL IF YOU WOULD LIKE.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN, YOUR LETTER REQUESTS OUR COMMENT ON CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE ISSUES PENDING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE. WITH REGARD TO H.R. 1987 TO FORMALLY NAME THE TOMB AREA AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, VA WOULD DEFER TO THE ARMY AND THE DIRECTOR OF ARLINGTON. WITH REGARD TO H.R. 2653 WHICH WOULD ESTABLISH A FOREIGN CURRENCY FLUCTUATION ACCOUNT WITHIN THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS

COMMISSION, WE WOULD DEFER TO THE VIEWS OF THE COMMISSION. THE OTHER TWO ITEMS HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON DMA, AND I WOULD BE PLEASED TO COMMENT.

GRAVE MARKERS AT WOOD, WISCONSIN. THE NATIONAL CEMETERY AT WOOD, WISCONSIN, RECEIVED 12 ACRES OF LAND FROM THE ADJOINING VA MEDICAL CENTER IN 1985. THERE WAS A SPECIFIC AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF TRANSFER THAT THE GRAVE MARKERS IN THAT SECTION WOULD BE FLAT. THIS CONDITION WAS MADE BY THE MEDICAL CENTER BECAUSE THE LAND IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE FACILITY'S GROUNDS, AND THERE WERE CONCERNS FROM A MEDICAL POINT OF VIEW THAT THE PROMINENT APPEARANCE OF UPRIGHT MARKERS SO CLOSE TO THE DOMICILIARY WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON PATIENT CARE. WITHOUT THE ADDITIONAL LAND THE CEMETERY WOULD HAVE CLOSED THIS YEAR. SECTION 401 OF H.R. 2005, INTRODUCED AT VA's REQUEST, WOULD EXEMPT THIS PARCEL OF LAND FROM THE UPRIGHT MARKER MANDATE OF P.L. 99-576. DMA SUPPORTS THE PROPOSAL TO PERMIT FLAT MARKERS IN AREAS TRANSFERRED TO THE CEMETERY BY THE MEDICAL CENTER. IT WOULD NOT HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE OVERALL USE OF UPRIGHT MARKERS IN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM, AND WOULD GENERATE NO SIGNIFICANT COSTS.

REASONABLE ACCESS TO NATIONAL CEMETERIES. A SECOND LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL, H.R. 1999, WOULD AMEND TITLE 38 TO PERMIT THE AGENCY TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS ON NON-VA PROPERTY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SAFE INGRESS AND EGRESS AT NATIONAL CEMETERIES. SIMILAR AUTHORITY IS ALREADY PROVIDED IN TITLE 38 WITH REGARD TO VA MEDICAL CENTERS. MINOR IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE AT SOME LOCATIONS USING AN ADMINISTRATIVE WAIVER PROCEDURE. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY FOR THIS PURPOSE WOULD BE MUCH MORE STRAIGHTFORWARD, HOWEVER, AND WOULD CLARIFY THE APPROPRIATENESS OF EXPENDITURES FOR MORE SIGNIFICANT REQUIREMENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, WE ANTICIPATE THE NEED TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO A ROAD AT THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CEMETERY NOW IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STAGE. WE SUPPORT THIS BILL, WHICH WAS INTRODUCED AT OUR REQUEST.

LET ME CONCLUDE BY SAYING THAT, ALTHOUGH IT IS NECESSARY TO TALK IN TERMS OF "WORKLOAD" AND "RESOURCES" AND "POLICY," DMA EMPLOYEES ARE VERY MUCH AWARE THAT WE ARE HERE TO SERVE PEOPLE, VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES - NOT JUST STATISTICS. THE BURIAL OF A FATHER, MOTHER, BROTHER, SISTER OR CHILD IS AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR THE FAMILY. WE HAVE ONLY ONE CHANCE TO DO THE JOB RIGHT, AND OUR MISSION IS TO DO IT RIGHT EACH AND EVERY TIME.

I WOULD BE PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.

Testimony of

James E. Watkins, Jr.

American Cemetery Association

Before the

Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs

Committee on Veterans' Affairs

U.S. House of Representatives

With Respect to

The Expansion of the National Cemetery System

July 1, 1987

AMERICAN CEMETERY ASSOCIATION
5201 Leesburg Pike, Suite 1111, Falls Church, Virginia 22041 (703) 379-5838 or (800) 645-7700

Chairwoman Kaptur and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is James E. Watkins, Jr. and I am here today on behalf of the American Cemetery Association. I am a past president of the American Cemetery Association and a past president of the Indiana State Cemetery Association. Besides being a second-generation cemeterian, I served with the Strategic Air Command as navigator and separated with the rank of Captain. I am also a member of the American Legion.

We appreciate this opportunity to testify and request that the complete text of our written testimony be made part of the record of today's hearing. At the conclusion of my testimony, I will be glad to answer any questions from you and the Subcommittee members.

The American Cemetery Association (ACA) is a national trade association which represents approximately 2,300 members including municipal, religious, and private cemeteries. The ACA respectfully submits its views on the proposed expansion of the National Cemetery System as outlined in Public Law 99-576 and as discussed in the recently published Veterans Administration report required by that law.

The ACA is neither opposed to the National Cemetery System nor to interment rights for certain veterans in the national cemeteries. When the National Cemetery System was created by Public Law 93-43 in June 1973, Congress acknowledged that these cemeteries did not exist in a vacuum but complemented other forms of burial benefits which used resources already available through private, religious and municipal cemeteries. We are

concerned that any plans to expand the National Cemetery System should continue to recognize the vast cemetery resources already in existence throughout the United States.

To encourage veterans and their families who preferred interment in non-VA cemeteries, PL 93-43 authorized a plot allowance of $150. This plot allowance was also viewed as a means to offset demands on the National Cemetery System and as a convenience to veterans' families who elected interment in non-Federal cemeteries. Additional forms of burial assistance such as the marker and funeral allowances have also been developed to avoid a forced reliance on the national cemeteries. The Veterans Administration had acknowledged as early as 1974 that national cemeteries were local in nature since the overwhelming majority of those veterans interred in national cemeteries lived within 50 miles of the cemetery where they were buried. Similar to the experience of private cemeteries, few veterans ever elect interment in a national cemetery located beyond a 50-mile radius of their community.

Faced with the financially impractical task of establishing a national cemetery within 50 miles of every veteran population center, Congress adopted a regional concept whereby an open national cemetery would exist in each of the Ten Standard Federal regions. This concept has since been completed and we strongly concur with the position stated by the VA Administrator and the Chief Director of the Department of Memorial Affairs in 1985 that it is inappropriate to initiate "a new, enhanced policy for national cemeteries in the absence of a full debate of the issues." To date, we believe that Congress has never made a comprehensive review of the critical issues involved in cemetery expansion and operation.

Public Law 99-576 recognized that the Veterans Affairs Administrator has existing authority to establish ten new national cemeteries at specific sites across the country and in any other state where a national cemetery is not available. However, while the VA Administrator has the authority to recommend sites, Congress is responsible for appropriating the funds to construct and maintain new cemeteries. We believe that a comprehensive study of the National Cemetery System needs to be undertaken by Congress prior to the approval of any future funding.

We can support some of the conclusions stated in the VA Report on the National Cemetery System which was prepared in response to PL 99-576. Specifically, we endorse the VA's proposal to conduct a policy review to evaluate current policy and to investigate other options beyond the simple creation of more national cemeteries. The law which mandated this VA report, however, failed to require the VA to investigate certain areas critical to establishing a comprehensive understanding of the future needs of the National Cemetery System. We would like to briefly review some of these issues.

First, the VA report does not discuss the liability of annual cemetery maintenance expenses. These costs would include gravesite maintenance, road repairs, water and drainage systems, and related administrative operations. In the private sector, we know that on-going maintenance expenses are constantly escalating due to increased labor costs, equipment replacement and the uncertain effects of future inflation. Most private cemeteries are required by state law to operate maintenance care trust funds to provide a continuing source of income for future use in defraying maintenance expenses.

The National Cemetery System has no such trust fund and must rely solely on outlays of tax dollars each year, indefinitely, to meet continually rising maintenance expenses. An expanded federal cemetery system only worsens this problem. In the absence of comprehensive data, we do not believe it is in the best interests of the American taxpayers, including veterans, for Congress to appropriate additional funds for an ever expanding system.

Second, the Government has no idea how many of the 27.8 million veterans alive today wish to be buried in a national cemetery. At one time the VA did conduct a burial reservation program for veterans but this program was discontinued in 1962. We are particularly concerned that the extent to which younger generations of veterans prefer national cemetery interment is an unknown factor. Thus, even projections of anticipated veterans' deaths on a yearly basis do not establish veterans' preferences for interment in national cemeteries. We have found that previous estimates are subject to serious overstatement. For example, a 1973 VA study estimated projected cumulative veterans deaths from 1987-2000 to be 8.7 million. The current VA report projects the 1987-2000 cumulative figure at 7.2 million or almost 1.5 million fewer deaths than the 1973 study. We submit that current estimates through the year 2020 could likewise be overstated and are unreliable at this point in time for determining whether new national cemeteries should be built to accommodate projected needs to the year 2020.

Third, any projection of the anticipated need for future national cemeteries must recognize the steadily increasing cremation rate in the United States. The VA report states its cremation interment rate has risen from 3.3 percent in 1973 to 16 percent in 1986. This current rate strongly suggests that private sector estimates of 30 percent by the year 2000 may be

too conservative. The increased preference for cremation will have a direct effect on the acreage requirements of existing national cemeteries and raise significant questions on the need for additional cemeteries beyond the year 2000. In addition, we are finding an increase in cremation without the traditional forms of interment, alternate forms now being a scattering of the cremated remains or other types of memorialization. There is every indication that this trend will continue to increase in the future and we note that, historically, veterans' interment preferences have closely paralleled interment patterns found in the private sector. The VA report is unclear whether it has factored in the likely future cremation rate in projecting the need for future cemeteries.

A fourth factor having a direct bearing on the number of future interments will be the extent to which other burial benefits continue to be made available to the veterans and their families. Obviously a curtailing of these other burial benefits, such as the Reagan Administration's proposal to restrict the eligibility for the plot allowance, will artifically create a surge in VA interments. Likewise, an increase in the burial benefits, such as the proposed increase from $150 to $250 for the plot allowance as contained in H.R. 615, would most likely result in a decrease in demand for VA interment from present levels. The important distinction here is that the plot allowance is a one-time payment whereas VA interment is a continuing financial obligation. We propose that a more fiscally sound method of providing burial benefits would be to increase the amount and expand the eligibility of the plot allowance and to limit the eligibility for interment in national cemeteries, thus preserving grave inventory in national cemeteries well beyond the current projected figures.

Fifth, we note that the VA report recommends encouraging increased participation in the State Cemetery Grants Program. Our members have indicated that, based on their discussions with various state legislators around the nation, the lack of interest in the program is not caused by a lack of information. It is our impression that state legislators seem to be aware of the dangers of ever-increasing maintenance expenses and many are concerned with the so-called "cradle to grave" concept of veterans' benefits as developed by the Federal Government. The ACA strongly urges that any revised policy affecting the future of the National Cemetery System includes the development of a working relationship with private cemeteries to provide burial benefits for local veterans as one alternative to state cemetery grants. For example, a section in a participating private cemetery could be set aside specifically for veteran interments with specifications and standards for this burial ground developed by the Veterans Administration.

Finally, ACA proposes that the Congress reaffirm the original concept of the National Cemetery System so it will operate in conjunction with other VA burial benefits and in recognition of the resources of cemeteries in the private, religious and municipal sectors. We realize that the tremendous budget deficits facing the nation require, among other things, a further prioritizing of veterans' benefits, a task which must be carefully worked out among the various veterans organizations, the VA, and the Congress. We know that VA medical care, housing and educational programs all have definitive cost figures that are reasonably ascertainable. However, we feel there exists a significant lack of cost and related information regarding the future expansion of the National Cemetery System.

We urge the Committee to require a comprehensive study by the Veterans Administration and the General Accounting Office which thoroughly explores all the alternatives available in providing future veterans' burial benefits including all financial considerations. In closing, we concur with the VA report when it states, "Establishment of new policy to address the issue of expansion/non-expansion will be predicated on a full analysis of the effectiveness of the present system and programs, and a definition of the extent to which the veteran community is to be reasonably served." Thank you.

STATEMENT OF JERRY J. BROWN

THE ECONOMIC AND AESTHETIC IMPACT
OF USING OUTER BURIAL RECEPTACLES
IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES

Preface:

Since the dawn of mankind, some form of entombment or protective enclosure has been used to encase, surround, protect (and MEMORIALIZE) the deceased. Even today, ancient pyramids, catacombs and sealed crypts remain as silent testament to mans' compelling need to safeguard the dead.

In recent decades, the preference for some form of outer burial receptacle to encase and protect the casketed body in earth burial has expanded to include the aesthetic, functional and economic concerns of cemetery management as well as fulfilling cultural values and traditions.

The following data has been compiled in a question and answer format to shed light upon a subject - which because of its very nature - is unfamiliar to the average person i.e. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING OUTER BURIAL RECEPTACLES IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES.

Question: "What is an outer burial receptacle?"

Answer: There are 2 forms of outer burial receptacles...
A Sealed burial vault and a 2 piece Grave Liner. Both are used exclusively for underground burials.

Question: "Are outer burial receptacles required by law?"

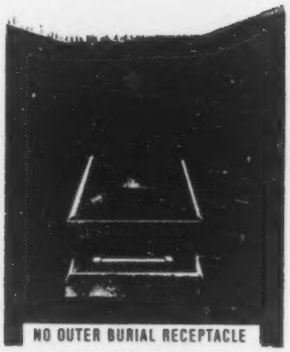
Answer: "NO! However, the vast majority of cemeteries throughout the United States do require that some type of outer burial receptacle be used for all interments.

Question: "Why would cemeteries require the use of outer burial receptacles?"

Answer: "Because of the initial compressive weight of the earth's backfill (7 - 9,000 lbs), plus the added compression weight of cemetery trucks and equipment passing over the gravesite, an unenclosed casket could collapse thus causing the grave to sink.

Also, the existence of hydrostatic, barometric and freeze - thaw forces could - at optimum conditions - exert several additional tons of total force upon the unenclosed casket.
(See corresponding graphics)

Certain cemeteries do permit the burial of the casket with no outer receptacle.



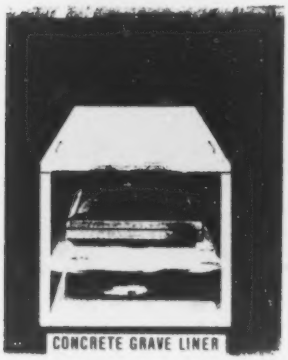
In time, the forces of nature may collapse the unenclosed casket, causing the grave to sink. Extreme earth pressure can also crush the casket.

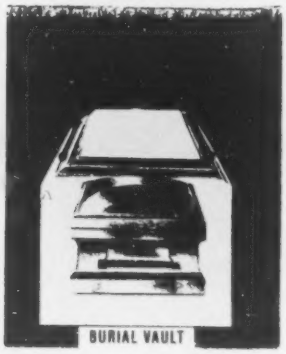
Question: "What are the material components of outer burial receptacles?"

Answer: "The most widely used burial receptacles are constructed of a high quality concrete with minimum standards of 4500 lbs per square inch compressive strength."

Question: "Will grave liners and burial vaults comply with the minimum requirements of a cemetery?"

Answer: "YES - providing the outer interment receptacles have met the minimum standards of quality construction established by the National Concrete Burial Vault Assn."
(See corresponding graphics)





Question: "Do the National cemeteries require the use of outer burial receptacles?"

Answer: "Not at this time. However, during a 5 year period in the 1970's, all National cemeteries operating under the jurisdiction of the Veteran's Administration - Department of Memorial Affairs, were required to use at least a minimum graveliner for all interments.

Question: "Why did the National cemeteries drop this requirement?"

Answer: "Because of budget cuts which eliminated Government furnished graveliners to comply with the regulations in situations where vaults were not selected. There are only 3 National cemeteries which still require outer burial receptacles.

Question: "Is the V.A., National Cemetery Service in favor of requiring outer burial receptacles?"

Answer: "Let's say that the majority of people involved in the planning and management of the VA National cemeteries would definitely prefer the universal use of some form of outer burial receptacles."

Question: "Why?"

Answer: "High authorities within the National cemetery system have stated that the use of some form of outer burial receptacle for all interments is definitely "cost effective" and necessary to the continued maintenance and beautification of National cemeteries."

Question: "What is meant by 'cost effective'?"

Answer: "Exhaustive surveys have revealed that when a casket is interred without some form of outer burial receptacle, depending upon soil conditions, anywhere from 5 to 11 restorations would be required during the longevity of the grave (25 - 50 years). Factoring in the current approximated labor costs of $28 to $35 per grave restoration (refilling, tamping, re-sodding/seeding and marker alignment) these maintenance costs are significant and, given the projected numbers of W.W.II Veteran deaths by 1995, the costs will be monumental in scope."

"Thus, the use of outer burial receptacles would eliminate the long range maintenance costs of grave restoration and presumably reduce the overall maintenance budgets of the National cemeteries."

Question: "Other than the crushing forces of the earth weight, are there other factors which could cause damage to caskets where no outer burial receptacles are used?"

Answer: "Yes. Unencased caskets are subjected to damage when adjacent graves are being opened by hydraulic back-hoes i.e. ripping or shearing of casket. Also, the presence of water in the grave and the disintegration effects of soil chemicals can accelerate the disintegrating of the casket."

Question: "Because Veterans and eligible dependents can be buried in National cemeteries without cost e.g. free grave space; marker; and perpetual care of graves - who pays the freight (so to speak)?"

Answer: "Simply and succinctly, THE TAX PAYER!"

Question: "Then wouldn't the use of outer burial receptacles in all burials ultimately be in the best interests of the tax payer in light of reduced maintenance costs in the National cemeteries?"

Answer: "Fundamental economics would indicate an affirmative -- especially in an era and under an administration where federal budgets are being drastically cut."

Question: "How would the use of outer interment receptacles enhance the aesthetics of a National cemetery?"

Answer: "As part of a report entitled 'Prototypes of Interment Methods Judged Appropriate for National Cemeteries', a section of the report states: "An appropriate interment method is when it permits a significant yet economical interment for the Veteran and his eligible deperdents and results in a burial ground that confers honor on those interred.' A sub-heading of this report further describes appropriate interment methods as 'a place to conduct dignified committal services in quiet, pleasant and unobtrusive surroundings' and, 'cemetery development esthetically equal to that provided in the private sector and maintenance of the cemetery appearance to relatively high standards'."

Question: "Do graves really sink when no outer burial receptacle is used?"

Answer: "Yes! For example, in a section headed "Grounds Maintenance" under the V.A.'s Interment Record For Next of Kin form, it states: "Because the soil continues to sink after a burial, a new grave requires repeated renovation and until the turf has been established, burial areas may be substandard in appearance."

Question: "Is it true that Arlington National Cemetery may issue a requirement, that outer burial receptacles be used on all future interments?"

Answer: "We are advised that Arlington National Cemetery officials have petitioned for consent to such a ruling and although Arlington still operates under the jurisdiction of the Department of The Army, the granting of such a recommendation would be a significant precedence."

Question: "In light of the V.A.'s policy of subsidizing Veterans' and eligible dependents' burial costs in all National cemeteries, wouldn't the requirement of the purchase of an outer burial receptacle be regarded as incongruous and contradictory to this traditional benefit?"

Answer: "No! Given the fact that the outer burial receptacle is defined as an integral part of the physical interment process and a unit which is relevant to the perpetual care, beautification and ongoing maintenance of the National cemeteries, the requirement would represent long range fiscal planning and operational prudence, especially with respect to current federal budget constraints.

Statement of

The American Legion

1608 K STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006

by

PAUL S. EGAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION

and

RODNEY S. KIRK, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

on

OVERSIGHT OF NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

July 1, 1987

STATEMENT OF RODNEY S. KIRK, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JULY 1, 1987

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The American Legion appreciates this opportunity to express to the Subcommittee its views on the implementation of PL 99-576, as it relates to the National Cemetery System, and various other specific legislative initiatives to be considered here today.

H.R. 1999 would amend title 38, USC, to authorize the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress.

The American Legion is supportive of this proposal which will provide authority equal to that already in existence for DM&S for similar situations at individual VA medical centers. It is our understanding that presently, DMA can only expend funds in this regard with specific General Counsel approval. Enactment of this proposal would allow DMA to more expeditiously alleviate hazardous ingress/egress problems as they are identified. A case in point, Madam Chairwoman, would be the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, wherein it has been documented that several automobile accidents have resulted from an absence of any turning lanes into the cemetery, forcing dangerous, high speed exists from a major four lane highway onto the cemetery grounds.

The American Legion supports the legislative provision which would exempt the cemetery adjacent to the Wood, Wisconson Veterans Administration Medical Center from complying with the upright marker policy. We note for the record, that without the additional 12 acres, received from the VAMC, the cemetery would most likely have to be closed sometime this year. The desire and reasoning for utilization of flat markers in lieu of uprights, in this case, is obvious when considering the location of this acreage, which can be easily viewed from the Domiciliary. Historically, DM&S and DMA have always been cognizant of the psychological impact cemeteries adjoining medical center grounds have on the patient population, and have taken similar actions to eliminate these factors.

The American Legion policy regarding flat vs upright grave markers is set forth in Resolution No. 1, approved by the National Executive Committee during its meeting in May, 1985. This policy was formulated based on a number of considerations, including operating efficiency, cost effectiveness, conservation of cemetery land, and private sector trends. The resolution mandates this organization to support the utilization of flat grave markers in all national cemeteries with two exceptions. The two exceptions are the Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minnesota and the Black Hills National Cemetery in South Dakota. These exceptions were based on the fact that both of the national cemeteries are located in cold weather States that experience heavy snowfalls and icy conditions for approximately four months of each year, making it virtually impossible for families of veterans to locate gravesites where flat markers are used. In addition, and equally as important is the fact that these two cemeteries have ample land to accommodate the use of a 5' x 10' gravesite, thus enabling the use of larger upright headstones. With flat markers, it is possible to use a standard grave size of 4' x 8' with a yield of 1,312 gravesites per acre versus 840 gravesites per acre using the 5' x 10' grave size.

However, all that being so, Public Law 99-576 requires VA to revert completely to utilizing upright grave markers with noted exceptions. The American Legion has two major concerns with

respect to implementation of this law. Our first concern involves those 13 national cemeteries that have, since they were constructed, exclusively utilized flat grave markers. Requirements in PL 99-576 dictate that upright headstones now be utilized in these cemeteries as well, and we question the reasoning behind this requirement. In addition, it appears that PL 99-576 does not make the exception for utilizing flat grave markers on the 3' x 3' plots utilized for interment of cremated remains under the Garden Niche Program. Through this concept, thousands of veterans and dependents who choose to be cremated, can be interred in close proximity to their home and loved ones even if the national cemetery is in "closed status." The American Legion feels that an exception to the requirements of PL 99-576 for upright grave markers must be made to accommodate the Garden Niche Program. Available statistics show that in FY 1986, about 16% of all interments within the National Cemetery System were of cremated remains, compared to just over 3% in FY 1973.

The most significant benefit taken away from veterans by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (PL 97-35) was the $300 burial benefit that had previously been payable at time of death to ensure the decent burial of all honorably discharged war veterans. The American Legion did not accede to the loss of the burial allowance, and firmly believes it was a mistake to eliminate the eligibility of most veterans for this benefit. The restrictions on entitlement to this allowance have placed an economic value on a benefit that was freely given by Congress to ensure that all veterans would be buried with dignity and respect, regardless of their income or social standing at time of death. The present restrictions violate the Legion's long-held principle of equal benefits for equal service.

The American Legion is mandated, through Resolution No. 496, approved by Delegates to our 1986 National Convention held in Cincinnati, Ohio, to seek the restoration of the former eligibility criteria for the burial allowance to all veterans who have served honorably in time of war or national emergency and to increase this burial allowance to $400.

In addition, a legislative initiative has recently been proposed by the Administration to amend section 903 of title 38, USC, to change the eligibility criteria for the $150 plot allowance by making it similar to the current eligibility requirements for burial allowance. Resolution No. 366, adopted by Delegates to our 1986 National Convention mandates The American Legion to "oppose any legislative or administrative proposal that would amend the eligibility criteria of the plot allowance for veterans by making it consistent with the current eligibility requirements for burial allowance." Furthermore, through Resolution No. 497 from our 1986 National Convention, we are mandated to sponsor and support legislation to increase the present burial plot allowance for veterans from $150 to $250. As a result of this, H.R. 2450 has been introduced during the 100th Congress on behalf of The American Legion.

Madam Chairwoman, another important factor to take into account when considering the imposition of future restrictions on plot allowances is the overall impact such restrictions will present to the State Veterans Cemetery Grants Program. The American Legion has been informed that in some States, the plot allowance stipend accounts for over 60% of State Cemeteries operating expenses. The recently released Report on The National Cemetery System, states: "Participation (in the State Cemetery Grants Program) allows States to provide veteran burial space in close proximity to their place of residence while alleviating the full financial burden on the Federal Government in meeting veterans' burial needs. The program should be studied to identify areas of improvement to make it more effective in meeting program objectives and more appealing to State legislators."

Before we conclude Madam Chairwoman, we would like to highlight the fact that the Department of Memorial Affairs and The American Legion have always maintained a close working relationship which has benefited the veteran community considerably over the years. Because of this relationship, The American Legion is very much aware of the work load and resources of this Department. In that regard, we wish to express concern about the constantly increasing work load, in the face of ever-decreasing resources and manpower.

Over the years, complaints from our field offices, directed at the Department of Memorial Affairs, have been minimal. As of late however, we have been informed by several of our Department Service Officers of substantial delays within the headstone and marker program. DMA officials have informed this organization of some of the factors that have played a key role in those delays, such as the ongoing conversion to computerization within the program. However, what they do not say, and what The American Legion is very much aware of, is the fact that over the last 13 years, the work load has almost doubled, while allocated resources have been severely diminished. It is a cold hard fact, and an unfortunate one, that should this trend continue, as it is expected to do, more serious repercussions and delays will be realized across the system. According to VA's recently submitted Report on The National Cemetery System, there will be an estimated 426,800 veteran deaths in 1987, increasing to over 610,000 in 2010. Annual interments are expected to reach about 86,500 in 2010. Based on these statistics alone, Madam Chairwoman, it is clearly evident that the Department of Memorial Affairs will encounter extreme difficulty maintaining the quality of service presently provided.

During its February 1987 meeting in Washington, D.C., The American Legion's National Cemetery Committee, after extensive briefings by VACO personnel, expressed the following sentiment: "The Committee therefore urges all concerned citizens to express to this nation's policymakers that this is certainly no time to reduce resources of the Department of Memorial Affairs, but to substantially increase these resources to allow the Department to continue providing adequate services and benefits to America's veterans."

We would like to conclude by reiterating that burial related benefits are, in fact, the only benefits that apply to all veterans. Most veterans are not disabled; most never use VA medical centers; and just over half of all veterans have used the GI Bill education programs. The vast majority of veterans ask for nothing from the government other than a flag to cover their coffins when they die, and a decent funeral in a national cemetery. The American Legion considers this to be a realistic and modest expectation from those who served this country honestly and faithfully.

Madam Chairwoman, that concludes our statement. We would be happy to respond to any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have at this time.

THE NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

"STRENGTH IN UNITY"

Statement of

Charles R. Jackson
Master Chief Petty Officer, USN, Retired
Vice President for Government Affairs

before the

Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

on

National Cemetery System

July 1, 1987

225
~~219~~ N. Washington Street • Alexandria, VA 22314 • Tele: (703) 549-0311

Thank you for inviting the comments of the Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA) on the National Cemetery System, its operation, planning objectives and several pieces of legislation under consideration. Among the issues under review are implementation of the provisions of Public Law 99-576 regarding the use of upright markers in national cemeteries, the Report on the National Cemetery System required by P.L. 99-576, and H.R. 2005 providing the cemetery at Wood, Wisconsin an exemption from the upright stone requirements of P.L. 99-576. Also under review are H.R. 1999, a bill authorizing the Veterans Administration to contribute to the improvement of land surrounding national cemeteries for the purpose of providing safe ingress and egress; H.R. 2653, a bill to accommodate currency value fluctuation in the accounts of the American Battle Monuments Commission; and H.R. 1987, a bill to officially designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery where the remains of unknown servicemembers of WW I, WW II, Korea and Vietnam are interred as the "Tomb of the Unknowns". Because NCOA has a special interest in this bill we will begin our comments with it.

H.R. 1987

One of the most significant oversights in our nation's history has been the lack of an official name for the burial site at Arlington Cemetery wherein the remains of the unknown servicemembers of World War I, World War II, the Korean conflict and the Vietnam War lie.

In 1921 when the first unknown American was interred at Arlington Cemetery, it was reasonable to assume that the servicemember was a member of the United States Army, as World War I was primarily a land war. Thus, in common usage the tomb area was referred to as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

However, with the interment of the unknowns from World War

II and the Korean conflict, engagements involving soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen, the term unknown soldier was no longer appropriate to honor the service of those Americans from other branches of the armed services. The interment of the remains of the Vietnam War unknown has served to increase the urgency for providing an official name for this national shrine.

Although the authority to officially name any and all features within Arlington National Cemetery is within the purview of the Secretary of the Army, Secretary Marsh has deferred the official naming of the tomb area to the Congress because of its national significance.

The official naming of the tomb area requires no appropriation of funds, has widespread support and corrects an oversight that has existed too long.

NCOA salutes the chairman of this subcommittee for authoring legislation enabling Congress to provide an official name to this most important national shrine. We are pleased to give our complete support to the passage of this bill.

National Cemetery System

As required by P.L. 99-576 the Veterans Administration recently published a report on the National Cemetery System. In compliance with the law it comments on four issues. They are plans for operation of the cemetery system through the year 2000; identification of the areas in which the need for a national cemetery is greatest; an assessment of the desirability for federal aquisition of state veteran's cemeteries; and, a general plan for expansion of the system.

In summary, the report concludes the current National Cemetery System is adequate through the year 2000 and beyond. It suggests no improvements in the system beyond those which are

currently being implemented and it suggests no changes in current operating policy. In fact, the report goes out of its way to state, seemingly on every tenth page, that nothing contained therein should be considered as a change in administration policy supporting the regional cemetery concept developed in 1974 and that further development of the system would not be in conformance with that policy. Indeed, nothing new has emerged from the report. That does not mean NCOA views the report as useless. Quite the contrary. It identifies some significant problems the system will face in the future.

According to the report, 21 of the VA's 65 operating cemeteries will close between now and the year 2000. Another 15 will close in the first 20 years of the next century. Planned growth in the cemetery system will replace 5 of the 36 losses. In net, the system will lose 31 cemeteries in 33 years, leaving only 34 operating cemeteries by the year 2020. The report also acknowledges that this decline will reduce the potential number of veterans served from 70 percent to 49 percent. In sum, this is an excellent warning of what inattention to expansion will produce.

Concurrently, the report suggests the VA will take five steps to enhance cemetery operations. Four of these commendable initiatives are already underway. They include completion of cemeteries already under construction; greater participation in the State Veteran Cemetery Grant Program; progressive land development in existing open national cemeteries; and, limited expansion of existing national cemeteries.

Missing is the policy review for future expansion of the National Cemetery System. The report clearly states that "Expansion of the National Cemetery System under present policy, the regional concept, culminated with the establishment of Fort Mitchell National Cemetery to serve Standard Federal Region IV." It further states. "The five-point plan outlined here is directed

to serving the largest segment of the veteran population in the effective way and, to the extent possible, with states' participation."

In summary, the report says the VA will operate the existing National Cemetery System to the best of its ability, but the future of the national system is one of decline. The report also says the only future for veterans' burial sites rests with the participation of states in the grant program. The report all but abrogates federal responsibility for the operation of the cemetery system to the states. It vests all future growth of the system in state participation in the grant program.

The current report seems comfortable with that, but a previous, unpublished report prepared last year seems less sanguine about the use of state cemeteries as useful supplements. It concluded that, "With the exception of the Arizona Veteran Memorial Cemetery and two Maryland veteran cemeteries, interments in state cemeteries are minimal." The previous report attributes the state cemetery problems to restrictive eligibility requirements, inappropriate location and lack of public knowledge about the benefit. Some of these problems are related to deficits in the grant program, particularly with regard to location and eligibility. Yet, even with changes in the grant program, this is still a highly unreliable asset upon which to gamble future availability of cemeteries for veterans.

The previous report concluded that only about 34 percent of veterans were reasonably served by existing cemeteries. That conclusion was drawn from using population measures within a 50 mile radius of the cemetery. NCOA views this as a more reasonable measure than the 100 mile service radius used in the current report. However, the one area of agreement between the two reports is that services can be expanded to 26 percent more veterans by opening cemeteries in ten population centers. Expansion of the system into these areas would put 60 percent of

veterans within 50 miles of a national cemetery, more than 90 percent within 100 miles.

The regional cemetery policy was and is a wise alternative to the haphazzard development which occurred prior to its adoption. But it is not a stand alone solution. A federal region is just too large to be served by a single cemetery. More than ten years of experience with the system demonstrates that more than half of all interments in regional cemeteries are veterans whose families reside within 50 miles of the cemetery. Most are from within the state. Additionally, while the current system has potentially 3.5 million gravesites, this is far short of fulfilling the needs of the 20 million veterans expected to die between now and 2020.

For this reason, NCOA urges the committee to adopt a new policy for expansion of the cemetery system beginning with the construction of cemeteries in the ten areas identified by the study as demographically optimum locations. A National Cemetery System of regional cemeteries combined with planned cemeteries to serve veteran population centers and augmented by grant cemeteries in the states is the best system available to meet veterans' needs.

Upright Markers

The return to the use of upright markers in national cemeteries has been quite successful and well received by members of NCOA. As might be expected some use of flat markers will be continued in matters of family preference, but this is provided in the law and thus causes no problem. Accordingly, NCOA is a little confounded by H.R. 2005, a bill which would exempt the cemetery at Wood, Wisconsin from the use of upright markers.

The exemption has been requested because of the proximity of the cemetery to the medical center. In short, the visable

presence of upright markers are alleged to have an adverse impact on patient morale and a negative impact on recovery. Concurrently, however, granting this exception will deprive many veterans and their survivors of the honorable recognition manifested in the upright marker, the primary reason for returning to upright markers. Additionally, this cemetery is in an area subject to snowfall and groundcover by falling leaves which makes it virtually impossible to find a flat marker at certain times during the year. This, too, was part of the reason for returning to the use of upright markers.

NCOA does not wish to appear insensitive to the hospitalized veterans at Wood. However, we believe veterans are a uniquely resilient group of people. Certainly no group recognizes its own mortality more than those who have seen war and few could be more pragmatic about life than those who have served in the armed forces. Cemeteries are a part of life, not the end of it. They are as much for the living as the dead. They are places of honored memory and veterans, above all, understand this.

When the return to upright markers was under debate in Congress one witness opposed the legislation because he believed the use of upright markers in a cemetery adjacent to an airport would have an adverse impact on passenger morale and flight safety. Would providing an exemption at Wood give rebirth to this request or others for exemption?

In the final analysis, co-location of the facilities at Wood was probably a bad idea. But, having to live with that decision is a fact of life. Veterans in the hospital at Wood know that cemetery is out there and will not be fooled or cajoled from that knowledge by the absence of upright markers. It is a fact impossible to hide. It is apparent by the placement of flowers on graves, the recurring ceremonies and the necessary markers, flat or upright. Moreover, it should be apparent as a memorial to those interred therein. Accordingly, NCOA opposes the bill.

H.R. 1999 and H.R. 2653

NCOA is pleased to offer its support to the other two measures under consideration by the committee today. The first, H.R. 1999 authorizes the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to contribute to the improvement of lands adjacent to national cemeteries for the purpose of providing safe ingress and egress. This legislation has previously been approved by this body and is worthy of continued support.

H.R. 2653 would establish within the Treasury an account for the "American Battle Monuments Commission" (ABMC) to accommodate fluctuations in the value of foreign currencies. This method of accommodating variations in the cost of overseas services is used to mitigate the need for supplemental appropriations and the return of surplus appropriations in other federal agencies. It has proven reliable and NCOA is pleased to endorse its use for ABMC.

Conclusion

In conclusion, NCOA is supportive of all legislation under consideration today except H.R. 2005. The association does not believe any exception should be granted in the standard use of upright markers in national cemeteries. As previously stated, NCOA is particularly supportive of H.R. 1987 and is hopeful this long overdue legislation will pass.

Finally, NCOA believes the regional cemetery concept should be augmented by the construction of national cemeteries in the ten areas of demographic necessity identified in the VA report. Regional cemeteries should be retained as part of an expanded concept toward future development of the National Cemetery System. NCOA believes it should be a system of regional cemeteries augmented by cemeteries built on the basis of need in veteran population areas and further supplemented by grant cemeteries in the states.

Thank you.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

STATEMENT OF

JAMES N. MAGILL, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION'S NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

WASHINGTON, D. C. JULY 1, 1987

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before this distinguished Subcommittee to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars with respect to the National Cemetery System as administered by the Department of Memorial Affairs of the Veterans Administration. The VFW is appreciative of this Subcommittee for holding this hearing, demonstrating its continuous concern and commitment in honoring our nation's veterans.

As you know, the "Veterans' Benefits Improvement and Health-Care Authorization Act of 1986" (Public Law 99-576) is one of the most comprehensive pieces of veteran's legislation enacted in recent history. Its provisions impact on virtually every program administered by the Veterans Administration. Included in this new law are improvements in the national cemetery system.

Public Law 99-576 requires the Veterans Administration to provide upright grave markers at all national cemeteries for interment occuring after January 1, 1987. Flat markers would not be required in cemeteries closed or scheduled to be

closed prior to September 30, 1991, and the Administrator would be permitted to continue to furnish flat markers in an open section already using flat markers until the section is completed.

The VFW is on record as opposing the VA's position of mandating the exclusive use of flat markers in national cemeteries. The VFW, in testimony before this Subcommittee, pointed out the fact that flat markers are difficult to locate in areas subject to snow; do not portray the traditional solemn rows of soldier-like formations, and are subject to sinking and tilting when placed on a smaller grave site. We also adamantly believe the VA should not dictate to a family what they can do and where they can do it. There should at least be a choice. We commend the Congress for sharing our concerns on this issue by legislating the repeal of the VA's exclusive use of the flat grave marker. All information available to us indicates the transition back to upright markers, as called for in P.L. 99-576, is orderly and being met with appreciation from the families of recently deceased veterans.

In our letter of invitation, we were also asked to comment on several legislative proposals relative to the burial of former members of the armed forces. One such proposal would exempt the cemetery adjacent to the Wood, Wisconsin VA Medical Center from complying with the upright marker policy as required by Public Law 99-576. It is our understanding the particular parcel of land in question will serve as an addition to an existing national cemetery located several blocks away. As stated previously, the new section will be located adjacent to a VA medical center and, thus, will be in open view of patients and their visitors. The VFW believes the healing process is a multifaceted procedure in which the psychological well-being of the patient is just as important as the medical aspect of treatment. For this reason, the VFW

believes an exemption from the current upright marker policy is justified in this particular case and, therefore, we will not voice our opposition.

H.R. 1987, was introduced by the distinguished Chairwoman of this Subcommittee as well as several members of the full Committee including its Chairman and Ranking Minority Member. This bill would designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery where the remains of four unknown service members are interred as the "Tomb of the Unknowns". While never having been officially named, the tomb area has, through popular usage and acceptance, been commonly referred to as the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier". While the authority to name any and all features within Arlington National Cemetery rests with the Secretary of the Army, since 1959 it has been the position of the Department of the Army that Congress should determine the official title of the tomb area. The Veterans of Foreign Wars believes it is time for the Congress to name in law this most sacred monument to those who answered her nation's call and offered the ultimate sacrifice. The VFW supports and encourages the timely enactment of H.R. 1987.

The next bill under consideration, H.R. 1999, introduced by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the full Committee would amend Title 38 to authorized the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress. Similar legislation passed the House of Representatives during the 98th Congress but, unfortunately, did not clear the entire Congress for enactment. It is our understanding this bill would have minimum costs and provide for the safety of those wishing to visit the cemetery. We therefore have no objection to this bill's enactment. We do, however, envision the Administrator exercising his new authority by encouraging local governments to enter into cost-sharing agreements with the VA inasmuch as needed safety improvements will benefit the community as

well as the national cemetery.

The final bill scheduled for consideration is H.R. 2653 introduced by the Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. H.R. 2653 would establish a foreign currency fluctuation account within the American Battle Monuments Commission. While the American Battle Monuments Commission is funded in American dollars, it is obligated to pay a fixed-labor cost in the currency of the country in which the employee resides. It is estimated that 80 percent of the Commission's annual expenses are for labor costs. Because of this, the Commission is very dependent on the strength of the dollar against foreign currency. Should the dollar fall, the Commission must redirect the supply and procurement funds to the "salary" account. For example: since 1985, the value of the dollar has fallen 33 percent in France, thus seriously affecting the management of American cemeteries in that country. H.R. 2653, by establishing a foreign currency fluctuation account would afford protection to the American Battle Monument's position so that it would be able to utilize the total budget amount intended by the Congress for the maintenance and operation of American cemeteries on foreign soil. The VFW supports the enactment of H.R. 2653.

This concludes my statement and I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

STATEMENT OF
RICHARD F. SCHULTZ
ASSOCIATE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
July 1, 1987

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the more than 1.1 million members of the Disabled American Veterans and its Ladies' Auxiliary, may I say how much we appreciate this opportunity to express our views relative to the Veterans Administration's National Cemetery System.

Initially, Madam Chairwoman, the DAV wishes to commend you on the timely exercise of your oversight responsibilities and for the leadership role you are playing with respect to the VA's National Cemetery System. Actions taken by this Subcommittee impact in a most significant way, on our nation's veterans and their families.

In your letter of invitation to testify, you solicit our views on the implementation of Public Law 99-576, the "Veterans Benefit Improvement and Health Care Authorization Act of 1986," as it relates to the installation of upright markers in VA National Cemeteries and the contents of the VA's report required by Section 412(a) of that law.

Additionally, you have indicated that the Subcommittee will be considering a legislative provision of H.R. 2205 exempting the cemetery adjacent to the Wood, Wisconsin VA Medical Center from compliance with the upright marker policy, as well as H.R. 1999, H.R. 1987 and H.R. 2653.

With your permission I shall now comment upon the issues before the Subcommittee today.

H.R. 2205

This measure, introduced at the Administration's request, among other things, proposes to exempt the National Cemetery adjacent to the Wood, Wisconsin VA Medical Center from the provisions of Subsection 1004(c)(2) of Title 38, U.S.C. requiring upright grave markers.

Madam Chairwoman, we have no objection to this provision of H.R. 2205. However, as previously stated, the DAV believes that veterans and their families should have a choice, when possible, of the type of headstone or marker they desire.

H.R. 1999

This measure, introduced at the Administration's request, would provide the Administrator with authority to make contributions towards, or for, the construction of traffic control, road improvements, or other devices adjacent to a National Cemetery if considered necessary for safety reasons.

As you know, similar authority exists in Section 5008 of Title 38, U.S.C. relative to VA medical facilities. While we have no mandate from our National Convention delegates on this issue, we certainly have no objections to its passage.

H.R. 1987

This measure introduced by yourself, Madam Chairwoman, proposes to designate the area of Arlington National Cemetery, which safeguards the sacred remains of four unknown servicemen from World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War, as the "Tomb of the Unknowns."

Madam Chairwoman, the DAV has no official position mandated by our National Convention delegates on this issue. However, I feel certain that if individually polled, the majority of our members would pose no objection to the designation of this historic site in Arlington National Cemetery as the "Tomb of the Unknowns."

H.R. 2653

As introduced, this measure proposes to establish a foreign currency fluctuation account within the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The DAV has no official position on this measure.

* * *

Madam Chairwoman, as you know, Section 411 of Public Law 99-576 requires that upright grave markers be used for interments that occur in VA National Cemeteries on or after January 1, 1987, except in National Cemeteries scheduled to be closed by September 30, 1991 or, in the case of a National Cemetery with a section which has flat markers on the date of enactment of Public Law 99-576 (October 28, 1986), the Administrator may continue to provide for flat grave markers in such sections.

Also, Section 412 of Public Law 99-576 requires the Administrator to submit to the Committees on Veterans Affairs two reports on the National Cemetery System -- the first in 90 days and the second within 60 months after enactment of this Public Law.

Further, Section 414 of this act sets forth the Administrators authority to establish a National Cemetery in 10 specific states most in need of an open National Cemetery, as well as other states in which a National Cemetery is not available for burial of veterans.

Madam Chairwoman, the DAV has previously expressed our views on the issue of grave markers before this Subcommittee. We opposed previous VA policy to use only flat grave markers in National Cemeteries as, in our view, this practice was unfair to veterans and their survivors. We believe veterans and their loved ones should have a choice, when possible, to the type of grave markers they desire.

We appreciate the desire to keep our National Cemeteries as attractive as possible and recognize that upright grave markers certainly add to the beauty of our National Cemeteries. However, as stated earlier, we do suggest that, whenever possible, a choice be given to veterans and their families as to the type of grave marker they prefer. Possibly, as new cemeteries are constructed or existing ones expanded, consideration should be given to designating sections in these cemeteries for flat or upright grave markers.

Madam Chairwoman, as you know, the Administrator has released the first of the two reports required by Section 412 of Public Law 99-576. In the report entitled, "Report on the National Cemetery System," dated June 1987, the Administrator

describes the current and anticipated future demands that will be placed upon the VA's National Cemetery System and makes some recommendations as to how the National Cemetery System can meet the needs of veterans now and into the future.

This report, in part, reveals that there are 110 operating National Cemeteries in 38 states and Puerto Rico. However, of the 110 National Cemeteries, 45 are closed with an additional 21 scheduled for closure between 1987 and the year 2000. Also, there are 12 states with no National Cemetery and six states where National Cemeteries are closed to new interments. Simply stated, 36% of the 50 states have no National Cemetery grave sites.

This report also discloses that at present, 70% of our nation's veteran population resides within 100 miles of a National Cemetery -- thus having reasonable access to an open National Cemetery. However, should no new National Cemeteries be constructed and existing National Cemeteries be allowed to close as predicted, by the year 2020 less than half of our nation's veterans will have reasonable access to a National Cemetery -- this occurring at a time when the anticipated demand for National Cemeteries is at its greatest.

Also, as required by Section 412(b)(2) of Public Law 99-576, the Administrator has compiled a list, in order of priority, of the ten geographic areas in the United States in which the need for additional burial space is greatest. These are:

Chicago, Illinois
Northern California (San Francisco area)
Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Cleveland/Akron/Canton, Ohio
Detroit, Michigan
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas
Seattle/Tacoma, Washington
Albany/Utica, New York
Oklahoma City/Lawton, Oklahoma

The Administrator indicated, however, that while the report identified the ten geographic areas in which the need for burial space for veterans is greatest, based upon demographic analysis, this nevertheless does not change the regional cemetery policy of the VA nor does the VA endorse construction of National Cemeteries at any or all of the locations listed in this report.

Based upon the findings of this report, the Administrator has recommended a five point plan for meeting the future burial needs of our nation's veterans' population. These recommendations are: (1) encourage expanded participation in the State Cemetery Grants Program, (2) phased development of presently undeveloped land in open National Cemeteries, (3) expansion of the garden niche concept, (4) limited expansion of existing National Cemeteries and, (5) review policy for future expansion of the National Cemetery System.

Madam Chairwoman, we wish to commend the Administrator for this comprehensive report on the VA's National Cemetery System and for the recommendations on how to improve the system to better serve the burial needs of our nation's veterans and their survivors. At this time we would like to comment on the issue of providing reasonably accessible burial spaces for all of our nation's veterans.

As noted earlier, by the year 2020 more than one half of our nation's veteran population will reside more than 100 miles from an open National Cemetery. VA's persistence to continue a

National Cemetery System policy based solely on the regional concept, we believe, is not realistic.

In addressing the issue of providing reasonably accessible grave sites for our nation's veteran population, our National Convention delegates adopted a resolution expressing our belief that any expansion of the National Cemetery System should be based on a policy which contains the ultimate goal of providing at least one open National Cemetery in each state. Such a policy, we believe, will provide a final resting place relatively close to a veteran's home and family.

Madam Chairwoman, this completes our testimony. We again wish to commend you and the members of this Subcommittee for allowing us the opportunity to appear here today.

STATEMENT OF

BOB MORAN, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

OF THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CONCERNING

THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

JULY 1, 1987

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Bob Moran, Associate Legislative Director of Paralyzed Veterans of America. On behalf of our members we appreciate the opportunity to appear here today and present our views regarding the various issues and legislative proposals which relate to the national cemetery system.

PVA, as a congressionally chartered veterans' service organization, would like to thank the Chairwoman, Representative Marcy Kaptur, for holding this hearing and for recognizing the importance of these issues and benefits which are of concern to our nation's veterans and their families. PVA would also like to thank the Chairwoman for allowing PVA the opportunity to work with you and your most competent and professional personal staff and subcommittee staff in these important endeavors.

As you are aware Madam Chairwoman, the various bills being considered here today address several provisions concerning the national cemetery system. PVA will briefly comment on two of the bills, specifically, Section 401 of H.R. 2005 and H.R. 1999, with the remainder of our testimony concentrating on H.R. 1987, legislation which would designate the area of Arlington National

Cemetery, where the remains of four unknown service members are interred, as "Tomb of the Unknowns."

Section 401 of H.R. 2005

PVA supports this provision, Section 401, contained within H.R. 2005. We understand that this waiver from current law, allowing for use of flat grave markers instead of upright markers, would be to the psychological benefit of the veterans who are receiving care at the adjacent Veterans Administration medical center. PVA supports section 401 of H.R. 2005.

H.R. 1999

PVA supports H.R. 1999, a bill introduced by the Committee Chairman, G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, which would authorize the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress and/or egress. More specifically, this bill would allow the Administrator to make contributions to local authorities toward, or for, the construction of traffic controls, road improvements, such as turning lanes or other devices adjacent to national cemeteries if considered necessary for safe ingress and/or egress. PVA supports H.R. 1999, which amends Title 38, thereby enhancing the safety of employees, visitors, and the families of deceased veterans.

H.R. 1987

Madam Chairwoman, PVA would like to address H.R. 1987, a bill introduced by you and cosponsored by the Ranking Minority Member of this Subcommittee, Representative Dan Burton and the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee, Representatives G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery and Gerald Solomon. PVA wholeheartedly supports H.R. 1987, and commends you, Madam Chairwoman and the Subcommittee for recognizing an oversight that has long existed. This would be accomplished by first, officially naming, by law, a national shrine, and second, recognizing that there are now four bodies of unknown Americans interred at Arlington National Cemetery. PVA would also like to mention its support and commend Senator John McCain for introduction of S.1247 in the United States Senate; this bill is identical to yours Madam Chairwoman. Both

of you, Madam Chairwoman, and Senator McCain, a distinguished veteran himself, recognize the oversight that has existed in officially naming "Tomb of the Unknowns."

Historical Background

An Unknown Soldier was returned to the United States on November 8, 1921, and interred on November 11, 1921, one year after similar ceremonies on the part of many of our allies. The authorizing legislation, Public Resolution 67, 67th Congress, introduced by Representative Hamilton Fish, Sr., provided for the return to the United States the body of an unknown American who lost his life during World War I and for burial of the remains with appropriate ceremonies. At the conclusion of the burial, the Tomb was capped, but no monument was erected. Because World War I was mainly a land-war and the Army had carried the brunt of the fighting and causalities, it was natural for the unidentified decedent to be thought of as a soldier. Also the terminology, "Unknown Soldier," in connection with the decedents buried in France and England in 1920, already was in common use.

Legislation approved on July 3, 1926, authorized the expenditure of $50,000 on a competition among architects desiring to submit plans for completion of the Tomb. Preparations for completing the Tomb were begun soon afterward of the design contract; and the actual construction in Arlington was completed on December 31, 1931, ten years after the burial services. The Tomb itself or the site of these shrines have never been officially named by law.

After the burial of the first unknown from World War I, it was commonly referred to as the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier." When unknown members of the military from World War II and Korea were interred on May 30, 1958, the broader term "Tomb of the Unknowns" was adopted. An unknown serviceperson from Vietnam was interred on May 28, 1984, being the fourth American who sacrificed their life in defense of our nation. No legislation has ever been passed, or laws enacted to adequately reflect that there are now four unknown service members interred.

Authority to Name

The authority to name any and all features within Arlington National Cemetery, including the Tomb, rests with the Secretary of the Army. However, since 1959, it has been the Department of the Army's position that Congress should determine the official title for the Tomb area. In a letter dated March 4, 1987, from the Department of the Army to the President of the Combined National Veterans' Association, the Assistant Secretary of the Army, (civil works) Robert K. Dawson stated:

> ... inasmuch as this is a matter of national interest, the Department of the Army believes that Congress should determine the official title for the Tomb.
>
> Therefore, I suggest that your organization and the other veterans' groups contact your Senators and Congressmen to obtain the necessary support for an official designation of the Tomb.

In reference to the above statements, Paralyzed Veterans of America couldn't agree more.

PVA wholeheartedly supports and believes that now is the time for Congress to act and pass H.R. 1987, legislation that would officially designate, by law, the area of Arlington National Cemetery, where the remains of four unknown service members are interred as, "Tomb of the Unknowns."

I have attached my own personal statement regarding this issue and again on behalf of Paralyzed Veterans of America we appreciate your concern and strongly support the passage of this legislation.

Conclusion

Again, Madam Chairwoman, PVA would like to thank you and the Subcommittee for your interest and attention in these issues of concern to our Nation's veterans and their families. And, for your leadership in adequately addressing, through legislation, certain inadequacies that have existed in our national cemeteries in hope of improving them for all of society. That concludes our testimony Madam Chairwoman and Members of this Subcommittee, I will be glad to respond to any questions that you might have.

Comments from Bob Moran in reference to legislation, H.R. 1987 by Representative Marcy Kaptur and S. 1247 by Senator John McCain which was introduced to name by law the area in Arlington National Cemetery as the "Tomb of the Unknowns."

As a veteran, one who lost both legs in combat, I was amazed and appalled to learn that one of our most meaningful national monuments in the Nation's Capital does not have an official name as declared by law. The names, "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier," and "Tomb of the Unknowns" were derived from popular usage. I for one, one who joined the Army, one who believed in his country and in doing his patriotic duty by serving, just cannot buy the fact that this most hallowed and sacred ground is just called or commonly referred to as....and does not have a name in law, laws that also send young men to war.

The "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" will always be known as such, being the first interred, with the Tomb being capped above the ground, standing in silence since 1931. Also, the significance of that individual, representing a serviceperson killed in World War I, where the majority of those who served were army - thus the name "soldier." But, the fact is there are four unknown bodies, not just one, interred in Arlington Cemetery, from World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War, and these individuals represent all branches of service. I feel it is more of an injustice and disservice to those individuals, those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and to over half a million families of those who died, not to accurately reflect the change in times, and to name in law this most sacred National Shrine.

Now is the time to correct an inadequacy that has long existed in our Nation's history and to name in law that area where all four service-persons are interred, as "Tomb of the Unknowns." The Cabin John Bridge is now named the "American Legion Bridge," and the "G.I. Bill" is now named after one of our great veterans' advocates, Representatives G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, and both rightfully so. It's now time that this national shrine, which is visited yearly by over 6 million people from around the world, be properly named by law. As one of our Nation's disabled veterans, one who lost part of his body in defense of his country, I think now is the time for Congress to act. Thank you.

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Testimony of Congressman Rod Chandler
Before the House Veterans Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs

July 1, 1987

Mr. Chairman: I would like to thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns about the handling of a cemetery proposal in my district by the Office of Management and Budget and the Veterans Administration.

Since 1984, I have led efforts to secure funding for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to study a cemetery site being donated by the Port of Seattle and King County near the SeaTac Airport. I am happy to report that the House Appropriations Committee has included the necessary $200,000 in the FY 1988 HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill. But I still have no idea why such a small appropriation to study the donation of needed land was not possible through normal channels.

Certainly, necessity has not been an issue. Both the VA, all members of the Washington Congressional delegation, and the Washington State veterans organizations agree that there is a clear need for a new cemetery in the Pacific Northwest. Currently, the Willamette Cemetery in Portland, Oregon serves the needs of Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Idaho. This facility will reach its capacity by the year 2000 at the latest. As you know, the first formal step in establishing a new National Cemetery is the completion of an EIS to find the best location possible.

The Veterans Administration and the Washington Congressional Delegation have recognized that a national cemetery in the Seattle-Tacoma area would serve the largest concentration of veterans in the region. 77.5% of Washington's veteran population lives within a 100-mile radius of Seattle. It is also a reasonable cab fare from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SeaTac). King County and the Port of Seattle have offered to donate an appropriate tract of land south of SeaTac, and the VA has demonstrated substantial interest in securing this property, as long as the EIS review is in favor of this site. Given land availability and costs, the alternative will probably be a secluded, and significantly less accessible, rural site.

The VA has twice requested an EIS for the SeaTac site, but after the Office of Management and Budget deleted the request from the budget each time, another attempt has been delayed until 1992. Unfortunately, the property which the Port of Seattle has offered free of charge will not remain available that long.

While the King County Council has voted in favor of using the land as a national veterans cemetery, it has also expressed concern about the lack of participation by the Federal Government in securing the donated property. Under the VA's schedule, the EIS must be intitiated in the next few years if the cemetery is to be completed before Willamette is full. By the year 2000, the State of Washington alone will require an estimated 13,000 gravesites a year.

It would be extremely unfortunate if veterans in the Northwest lose what appears to be an ideal site for a cemetery. I hope and expect that when the House approves the H.U.D. and Independent Agencies Appropriation, the funds for an EIS on the SeaTac site will be included and the Senate will concur. But I also must wonder how many other needed plots of donated land have been rejected by the Federal government under similar circumstances.

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